

Between order and disorder: reading the short story “The yellow wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

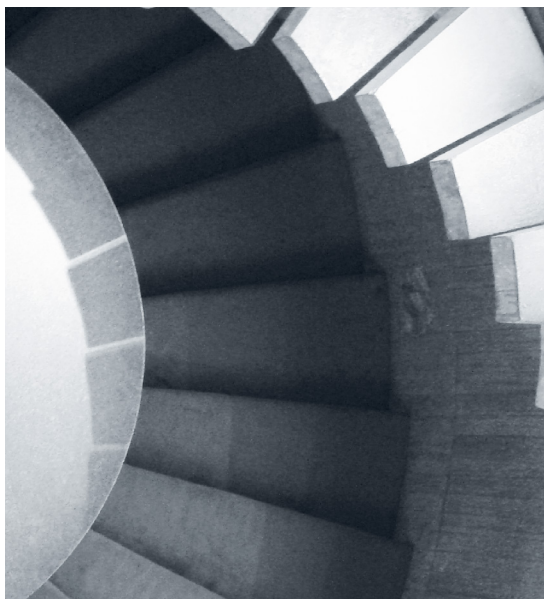
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Abstract

The article is based in two writings by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the short story *The yellow wallpaper*, published in 1892, and the testimony *Why I wrote the yellow wallpaper*, published in 1913. In the latter, the author reports her previous unsatisfying experience with the medical treatment which inspired the creation of the short story. This literary narrative was chosen, not only due to its qualities, but also because of the intersection with the theme of gender inequality in mental health and in treatments directed to women, driven by gender ideology. Stemming from the historical context, I point out the origin of depth psychology and of psychological perspectives in the treatment of mental illnesses and the importance of the development of the Junguian thought in a dialogue with other areas of knowledge, such as social, feminist, and literary

studies. Apart from historical and social aspects, the article makes a psychological reading of the short story, highlighting conflictive aspects and themes and alchemical symbols that are present in the narrative which, even after over a century, still haunts us. ■

Keywords
analytical psychology, literature, gender, mental health, Charlotte Perkins Gilman.



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One need not be a chamber to be haunted
One need not be a house;
The brain has corridors surpassing
Material place.
Far safer, of a midnight meeting
External ghost,
Than an interior confronting
That whiter host

Emily Dickinson (BENDER, 2007, p. 57).

Introduction

Old, isolated houses exert a strange fascination, permeate the collective imaginary, and appear as a recurring image in dreams, nightmares, books, and movies full of mystery, suspense, or horror. Over the years, typically ghostly and supernatural elements of these stories have transformed, gaining psychic colors and internal space in the human mind, in a way in which the “haunted house” shares the spotlight as the protagonist with a character who is “haunted” by their demons and unconscious conflicts, fighting with themselves, with the world around them and with the risk of going mad.

“*The yellow wallpaper*”, a short story published in 1892 by the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman, starts from this theme and its reading allows more than enjoying a good fantastical short story, it also enters the field of feminist literature when introducing important issues such as social roles and women’s mental health. Writer, journalist, and activist of the nascent American feminist movement, the author wrote the short story inspired by a previous personal experience, according to her testimony “*Why I wrote the yellow wallpaper*”, published in October 1913 in the magazine *The Forerunner*, which I shall mention later.

The limitation of women’s social roles, as daughter – wife – mother, being confined to the world of “home” and the social repression of the spontaneous expression of the desires that extrapolate this limitation can lead to madness? This literary narrative was chosen, not only due to its qualities, but also because of the intersection with the theme of gender inequality in mental health and in treatments directed to women, driven by gender ideology. Apart from historical and social aspects, my goal is to make a psychological reading of the short story, highlighting conflictive aspects and themes, and alchemical symbols that are present in the narrative which, even after over a century, still haunts us.

The imprisoned woman

The narrator, a young woman, her husband John, her sister-in-law and housekeeper Jennie, her baby and the nanny move temporarily to an old, abandoned house, away from the city. She feels sick and weak, has a weird feeling about the house, which makes her doubt the benefits that spending the summer in that property can offer. However, she is unarmed, impotent in a way before the objections of John, her husband who is a doctor, described by her as someone extremely practical and rationalist who does not believe she is 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? (GILMAN, 2007, p. 19).

The woman receives overt recommendations to stay at home, take vitamins, take light walks, and maintain rest without working and without

giving attention to her condition as a sick person. She is forbidden to write, but she writes secretly because she likes and assumes that writing “would relieve the press of ideas and rest her”. These furtive writings embody the short story and narrate in first person the experience of the unnamed character during her stay in the house in the summer to “rest”, and this way, as readers, we have access to the character’s perspective in relation to her internal and external world. The matter is that, from the beginning, the character feels uncomfortable about the house and the limitations of the treatment imposed on her, and the inability to dialogue associated with the state of fragility of the puerperium continuously generates anguish and anxiety. The three months stay in the house, particularly, in the room with the eponymous yellow wallpaper, results in a progressive worsening of the protagonist’s mental state, unlike the intended cure.

The condition of submission and imprisonment of the character in a patriarchal model of conjugal and social behavior is revealed at multiple points in the short story. In face of the inability of her husband to listen and value her complaints and preferences, a growing suffering, permeated with impotence, depression and guilty, befalls on the narrator, as shown in the following excerpts: “John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage” (p. 19); “You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?” (p. 19); “John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him” (p. 21); “Of course, it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me, so not to do my duty in any way!” (p. 22).

The woman imprisoned in social, conjugal, and psychological roles is the main theme of the short story. About the character that lives through becoming a mother and becoming sick simultaneously, and the limits imposed as medical care are the additional impact that delimits the time and space in the narrative and intensify the conditions of psychological distress of the character/narrator, creating pace and tension to

the narrative. In layers of reading, we can extract multiple nuances and meanings from the short story and, as I will comment subsequently, some aspects I think are important to highlight.

Submission, impotence, and annulment

Conflicting aspects appear gradually and gain strength with the first-person narrative. Remember that the short story is a forbidden journal of the unnamed character and its tone swings, as if following the emotional waves and moods. Between comments that are at times impotent and resigned, at times sharper and more ironic, we enter the world of a woman who carries a heavy burden of distress, whose desires and opinions are promptly rejected by her husband. A conflicting situation arises between John, the husband and doctor, who is rationalistic and pragmatic, and the wife, who is imaginative and sensible. The latter initially tries to talk, exposing her impressions about her treatment, about the house and room which she would like to occupy, about what she perceives as the best for her state, at last. But there is no space for dialogue between this couple, ruled by the power of the husband/doctor, who tends to see the wife’s creativity and imagination as something potentially pathological and who, with a patriarchal logic, inhibits and intimidates a possibly antagonistic position of the wife. In turn, she suffers with emotional instability and feels powerless, becoming more ambivalent in relation to the husband, which fosters guilty and confusion; after all, how can she refuse being treated with so much care?

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I’m sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition [...] He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction. I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more (p. 20).

This way, the conflict is silenced, and the wife is intimidated: “It is so hard to talk with John about my case because he is so wise and because he loves me so” (p. 27).

It is a common marital communication in double bind¹ situations and other types of psychological manipulation, in which the dominant voice of the husband/doctor is permeated with ambiguity, conflicting messages and subtle threats:

John says if I don’t pick up faster, he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall. But I don’t want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so! (p. 24).

Confined at home, the wife must stay in the said room with the horrible yellow wallpaper, which used to be a nursery. She cannot go to town nor have friends over. On the 4th of July, when they have guests over, ironically on the United States Independence Day, she must resign to her husband’s guests, instead of the ones she wished to see. There is a loss of autonomy and infantilization of the character, which becomes more insecure and disoriented in front of a treatment who leads to complete annulment – she cannot work, imagine, write nor interact with people outside the house.

The wallpaper conflict

Besides writing in the forbidden journal and unsuccessfully attempting to talk to her husband, the character’s attention is directed to the room with the yellow wallpaper. When spending hours lay down, because of the growing fatigue, prompted by her husband to sleep “all she can”,

the character observes the wallpaper, its misaligned forms, and its “repellant” color. What begins as a fantasy, something that reminds us of child’s play, grows in intensity, obtaining a dark tone. The narrator begins to live a double life, being the obedient wife who follows her doctor husband’s recommendations under the surveillance of her sister-in-law and, secretly, the woman obsessed with yellow wallpaper. The duplicity also manifests itself in the wallpaper, which transforms according to the light of day and night, sun and moon. Under the moonlight, the florid arabesque transforms into bars that imprison the women behind the paper.

The wallpaper attracted the attention of the character since the beginning of the story, and we can observe a transformation in the wallpaper and in the relation the character has with it, which occurs dynamically, not as separately as I describe in this article, with aspects that intermingle simultaneously - rejection, attraction, fusion and revelation, destruction, and liberation:

- a. Initially, there is a rejection of the wallpaper, an aversion even - it is interesting that the character refers to it with more acid and sarcastic expressions: the wallpaper is described as “horrid”, of a “hideous”, “repellant”, “sickly” color, with a “torturous” pattern. It is like her entire outrage potential was centered against the wallpaper. But she also notices something strange about it.
- b. Interest and attraction arise from the strangeness, when she notices the wallpaper has a background pattern, revealed by a certain type of light. She discovers “a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design” (p. 24).
- c. The next movement is of complicity and fusion, when she notices singularities on the paper that only she can decipher, which makes her even more excited: “There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will” (p. 26). “I have something

¹ A double bind is a dilemma in communication due to the contradiction between two or more messages. The thesis introduced by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson and his team (1956) considers that, in recurring conditions, said communication and interaction patterns in family relations can be a causative factor of mental disorders, including schizophrenia and other psychoses. Communication and language became subject to study and new therapeutic proposals in the field of mental health.

more to expect, to look forward to and to watch. I really do eat better, and I am quieter than I was" (p. 29).

- d. Revelation – the formless sort of figure that hides behind the pattern is a woman who by the daylight is "subdued, quiet", and during the night, crawls behind the bars of the wallpaper pattern. Little by little, besides crawling, the woman shakes the bars. "And she is all the time trying to climb through" (p. 31).
- e. Destruction and liberation - the wallpaper must be destroyed to free that woman who crawls and an entire legion of women who are imprisoned in the wallpaper. When she is not able to peel the entire wallpaper, she thinks about jumping out of the window, but gives up.

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 (p. 32).

I don't like to look out of the windows even – there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast. Do I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did? (p. 33).

The psychic life of the wallpaper

The wallpaper offers a field of imaginative flow for the character in an interaction that revives her psychic life, in such a way that from this wallpaper-woman fusion, the border between external and internal world became permeable, less distinct and the unconscious images of the woman gained life behind the wallpaper. She tried to deal objectively with the uncomfortable situation, but dialoguing with her husband made her exhausted. In these kinds of situation, the tendency is to occur a reflux, a recalling, the psy-

chic energy goes back to the unconscious, like the current of a river that follows its flow and, when meeting barriers, runs back. There is a regression, but the psychic energy is not depleted, it is still looking for ways, even though tortuous, dangerous and/or unhealthy ways. The protagonist finds gaps where she can fantasize freely in the wallpaper, trying to keep alive. And the wallpaper becomes a fertile canvas for her projections. The language of the unconscious world is different, symbolical, metaphorical, revealing aspects of the character's inner life, and what was supposed to have a decorative purpose becomes a prison, in a direct reference to the decorative (and imprisoning) role of the woman-wife-mother in the patriarchal society.

We can understand some elements of the short story as symbols of the conflict lived by the narrator, between the husband and the wife, male and female and, at the same time, as conflicts between the character's conscious and unconscious. The moonlight, with its ancestral symbolism tied to the feminine and to the unconscious, and the sunlight, tied to the masculine and to the conscious, makes a curious dance of light and shadows and participates in the projections and revelations of the wallpaper.

The shadow as a double, initially a "strange, formless type of figure", gradually reveals itself as a prisoner behind the wallpaper's pattern. The archetypal figure of the shadow, something that is in the consciousness, that usually haunts us and/or causes unpleasant reactions, appears here as a double of the character who, in the daylight, reveals herself to be a woman who is unsatisfied with the treatment conditions imposed to her, but is forced to the point of mental exhaustion, locked to the persona - the role of wife and mother adapted to patriarchal conventions.

It is interesting to note that the word pattern, used by the author, has a double meaning: of a wallpaper pattern and the condition of the character who is tied to a social pattern and in a patterned treatment, repetitive, collective, that follows social and medical rules, but that does

not fit her. The double unconscious, the woman behind the pattern that is a prison, crawls and submits herself to the disgrace of the wallpaper prison. And the wallpaper pattern is torturous, it is impossible to follow or decipher an acute expression of the conflict: “It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream” (p. 28).

The “sickly sulphur” yellow of the wallpaper is not a bright yellow, which leads us to the conclusion that this pattern is spoiled, outdated, with a rotten smell: “The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others” (p. 21). The “strange” yellow makes her think of “old foul, bad yellow things” (p. 30). The subtle and persistent smell of the wallpaper follows the character and impregnates her hair, making her disturbed: “In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me. It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house to reach the smell” (p.30).

These descriptions are similar to the decaying process, like we observe in nature, in leaves that go through multiple tones of yellow until its decomposition. And the hated yellow of the wallpaper exude its sulphur smell, characteristic of rotting things, associated to danger and evil. In the alchemical symbolism, applied to psychic processes, this “sulphur yellow” indicates the rotting of the work, the decay that precedes death. In its alchemical writings, Jung states that “sulphur is a spiritual or psychic substance of universal import” (JUNG, 2012, par. 132). Interestingly, he speaks about an unconscious force that propels the conscious, “which goes from a simple interest to the possession per se” that corresponds to the inflammable effect of sulphur:

[...] on the one hand the will, which can best be regarded as a dynamism subordinated to consciousness, and on the other

hand compulsion, an involuntary motivation or impulse ranging from mere interest to possession proper. The unconscious dynamism would correspond to sulphur, for compulsion is the great mystery of human life. It is the thwarting of our conscious will and of our reason by an inflammable element within us, appearing now as a consuming fire and now as life-giving warmth (JUNG, 2012, par. 146).

Alchemists used to consider sulphur as a usual attribute of hell and the devil, and Jung speaks about a paradoxal nature of sulphur and the unconscious processes of transformation, in which both poison and medicine can be originated from the same matter.

The end of the short story happens at the peak of a process in which the unconscious personality of the character fuses itself with an unconscious double, in a clear psychotic breakdown. Was it a complete destruction? Will there be a restoration of the conscious self under new conditions?

Beyond fiction: the history of the treatment

The testimony “*Why I wrote the yellow wallpaper*” was published in the October 1913 edition of the monthly magazine *The Forerunner*, written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman herself. In this account, the writer states that she looked for a “famous specialist” in nervous diseases on the third year of a continuous mental breakdown with melancholic tendencies. She declares that she went through the “rest cure” prescribed by him in 1887, and that when he noticed she was physically well, he sent her back home “with solemn advice to ‘live as domestic a life as far as possible,’ to ‘have but two hours’ intellectual life a day,’ and ‘never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again’ as long as I lived” (GILMAN, 2011). After following the medical instructions for three months, she states that she was near a mental ruin and, following her own perception and with

the support of a friend, she abandoned the treatment and went back to work: “work, in which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite—ultimately recovering some measure of power” (GILMAN, 2011).

She describes the satisfaction of writing the short story with its fictional additions and reveals, humorously, that she did not have any hallucinations or objections to her “mural decorations”, and states that she sent the short story to the doctor who almost drove her mad. Her satisfaction only grew when she got to know that her short story was valued by other alienists, and that it helped and stimulated many other women. The best result, however, was getting to know that, years later, the great specialist admitted to his friends that he had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading the short story.

The famous specialist that Charlotte Perkins Gilman went to was Doctor Weir Mitchell, who is mentioned by name in the short story when John subtly threatens to take his wife to that doctor if she did not get better. As a neurologist, Weir Mitchell describes his method in the book *“Fat and blood”*, the rest cure, which consisted of bed rest, overfeeding, massages, and electrical muscle stimulation. Weir Mitchell developed the method from his experience as an army doctor, treating war veterans from the Civil War who was traumatized by wounds and/or other experiences in battle and, afterwards, he began applying it to nervous diseases, such as neurasthenia and hysteria. The neurasthenia diagnoses appeared in the second half of the 19th century in the United States and were described by a neurologist from New York as a nervous exhaustion that was in part caused by modern civilization and organic or genetic predisposition. The new description of the disease crossed the Atlantic Ocean and spread through Europe, as well as the treatment proposed by Weir Mitchell. Well-respected at the time, he became famous with his method, which benefited multiple patients, both men and women, and was largely accepted, in England as well, where

it is said that his rest cure method was used when treating Virginia Woolf, who also despised it (STILES, 2012).

Despite the pros and cons of the method created by Dr. Weir Mitchell, what is relevant to us is the differentiation he made when applying this treatment to men and women, what would be considered sexist by modern standards. While women were forbidden to do any activities and were discouraged to live their intellectual and professional lives, men were allowed to choose the method between a more flexible rest cure or west cure, which included traveling to the west and doing cowboy like activities, such as horseback riding, roping cattle and hunting with other men. Multiple notorious people benefited from said method, such as President Theodore Roosevelt, painter Thomas Eakins and poet Walt Whitman (STILES, 2012). This gender-divergent model was widespread in the treatment of neurasthenia, which had its peak around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and followed a patriarchal ideology marked by the association of intellectual activities and work to men and home and family life to women (ZORZANELLI, 2010).

The mechanistic and organicist medical model was dominant at the time, in relation to both diagnosis and treatment of nervous diseases, and even methods such as Dr. Mitchell's, which were considered advanced for the time, still prioritized the physical recovery over psychological recovery. The dynamic psychiatry, as defined by Henri Ellenberger in his classic *“The Discovery of the Unconscious”* establishes itself in a more consistent way at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, featuring the ideas of Pierre Janet, Freud, Jung, and Adler, according to Ellenberger (1981). From then on, the talking cure, as psychotherapy became known, progressively became a recognized and widespread treatment method, both in Europe and the United States. It is worth mentioning that in 1909, in the period between the publication of the short story and the testimony of Charlotte

Perkins Gilman, Freud, and Jung took part in lectures at Clark University, in Worcester, Massachusetts, along with renowned William James, invited by Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Between order and disorder

Going back to the short story and the character's outcome, does it mean that madness is the only way out? Or would it be uncontrolled transgression? In psychic conflict situations, the conscious/unconscious balance and the structure of the conscious identity gives us the parameters to evaluate the support conditions of a crisis. The capacity of assimilating and finding meaning in contents that burst in conscience is fundamental in the evaluation and repercussion of a mental illness, and it is ideal that it occurs thanks to a professional. The breakdown that bursts in the character of the short story is a portal for a possible way out of the imprisonment – from the frustration and impotence to the fury to free the women inside the wallpaper. The old and rotten wallpaper that smells like sulphur must cease existing so that a new one can appear. The woman is a prisoner of social roles and patterns, under the vigilance of her husband and sister-in-law/housekeeper. And of herself, in a conflict of dissonant feelings and desires, probably due to the internalization of the social oppression model. The initial duel between shadow and persona or between the bothersome images projected on the wallpaper and the persona who is relatively adapted to the doctor husband and to social roles, became an alliance and in defense of the freeing desires that come from the unconscious.

The wallpaper is destroyed, and multiple women come out of it, creeping around, and exploring the garden, and the narrator inside the yellow wallpaper room feels free to “creep around as she pleases”. The act of creeping around, which is shocking and crazy to the eyes of the conscious, may indicate a regression to a childlike condition, or something more archaic,

animal like, that in the text, comes with the essential freedom of choice: “as I please”. The open ending with the character's breakdown causes suspense and make us concerned. We do not know how the character progresses in this crisis. Does the psychotic regression indicate the beginning of a new consciousness, or a mental disorganization established in the form of a disease? Was the destruction of the wallpaper a medicine or a poison?

The character writes and dialogues with herself, which may provide a favorable prognosis for future elaborations. Dialoguing with images from the unconsciousness, as Jung proposes, might create a way of comprehension of unconscious images for the consciousness based in a symbolic myth-poetical language. On his first book, *Symbols of Transformation*, published in 1912, one year before Charlotte Perkins Gilman publishes her testimony, Jung analyses the writings of a young North American girl, Miss Miller, who had been treated by the doctor Theodore Flournoy, and demonstrates bases of what he would in the future name as archetypes and collective unconsciousness. In his book, Jung formulates his psychodynamic comprehension, including serious cases, proposing that psychotherapy in these cases would inhibit or lower the dissociation of the psyche, or even better a prognosis in borderline cases (JUNG, 1995, par. 682). In the book's epilogue, Jung states how the assimilation of the unconsciousness may protect against a “dangerous isolation” that one feels in face of an “incomprehensible portion of one's personality”. The isolation may lead to psychosis and “The wider the gap between conscious and unconscious, the nearer creeps the fatal splitting of the personality” (JUNG, 1995, par. 683).

This comprehension depends on the opening of the consciousness to assimilate and find resonances in the unconscious contents, weaving new meanings. In this transformation perspective, new forms are created from old ones, the psyche is a dynamic process in constant transformation and to reach a new order, we need to

transit through disorder, creation-destruction-reconstruction – the process of individuation goes through a cycle of death and rebirth, the death of an older ego so there can be a new ego harmonizing with the Self.

Paper/Roles²

The character tries to save herself through the dialogue with her husband/doctor, with no results, and by writing a journal that express her growing anguish and isolation and forms the short story. The short story “*The yellow wallpaper*” express the literary work of the author who tries to create a fictional story based on her personal experience. She takes the woman out of the paper in fiction and places the woman in the paper through literary writing:

I did write for a while spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal-having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition. (GILMAN, 2007, p.19)

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me (p.23).

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I must say what I feel and think in some way - it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief (p. 25-26).

From the destruction of the suffocating paper, comes the liberation of multiple women that go out and creep around during the day, like children exploring a new world; the narrator creeps over her husband who is battered by her “madness”.

We can think about sexism as a cultural complex in its harmful effects to the collective psyche. Thomas Singer states that the cultural complex emerges from historical experiences “that have taken root in the collective psyche of a group and in the psyches of the individual members of a group” (2019). This cultural complex stays alive and acting “as an inner sociology” and expresses archetypal values for the group (SINGER, KAPLINSKI, 2019). Unfortunately, something still smells bad and follows us in clinics, in society, in the news, like the sulphur smell of the yellow wallpaper. There is something rotten and structural that is conventionally called patriarchal culture, as a living complex that does not die. The analyst Demaris S. Wehr (2015) states in her book “*Jung and feminism: liberating archetypes*”:

sexism and its psychological companion in women, internalized oppression, are still so widespread in our society that any psychological theory and practice that does not take those facts into account and oppose them unrelentingly is not a freeing therapy for women (p. 100).

There are numerous studies being made contrasting feminist theories with the Jungian thought, and I mention here the work of the analyst Susan Rowland (2002), who brought precious revisions of the Jungian theory using feminism and gender issues as an axis in her book “*Jung: a feminist revision*”. In this book, she reiterates that, even if we consider the heritage of patriarchal motifs, the psyche is archetypically androgynous and inevitably defies the patriarchy.

Conclusion

Going back to the initial point about the limitations imposed by the patriarchal culture as

² I should note that the word “papel” in Portuguese has multiple meanings that are lost in translation. It can mean both “paper” and “role”.

a source of mental illnesses, we can conclude that this is a factor found in the clinic that generates multiple distress situations, which go from lighter cases to serious traumas and psychotic breakdowns. New form of comprehension and treatment to mental distress have arisen from the period described in the short story and listening to and accepting the person distressed are part of, or should be part of, the basic assistance to these people. In mental health research, especially in medical schools, the interaction with other fields of human, social and political studies is essential, as well as to avoid discriminatory practices in all levels of human attention. In the field of analytical psychology, there is still a lot to do and rethink in a world in constant change. That way, new research and theoretical reviews are bringing important contributions for the Jungian though, in a dialogue with other subjects.

Concerning social inequalities in gender issues, in a little over a century, we lived through giant transformations. The feminist movement, who had Charlotte Perkins Gilman as an activist, had huge unquestionable conquests, and the movement of women in defense of freedom and rights is still strong and necessary in face of a patriarchal culture that rots, but does not die, remaining until now in violent and grotesque ways.

The short story "*The yellow wallpaper*", published in 1892, and the text "*Why I wrote the yellow wallpaper*", published in 1913, show that art, science and social transformations can walk side by side in a fertile dialogue, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman notes in her essay. Jung considered the importance of a social function of art in the education of the spirit at the time in recovering from collective unconsciousness images that were necessary for the collective consciousness (JUNG, 1991, par. 130). I think that literature, in its creative transformative force, is a precious ally in the formation of the analyst, stimulating the connection with our human complexity, anticipating and problematizing issues. The short story ends in a note that suggests a fury that destroys the roles imposed by a patriarchal and sexist culture that subjugates and alienates women. A rebel fury, decisive to break all imprisoning papers, even if the act of freeing might be seen as madness. A madness that, in that case, attends a creative purpose, since Charlotte Perkins Gilman proposes that writing is a powerful weapon for this fight. ■

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Resumo

Entre a ordem e a desordem: leitura do conto “O papel de parede amarelo” de Charlotte Perkins Gilman

O artigo parte de dois textos da escritora Charlotte Perkins Gilman, o conto *O papel de parede amarelo*, de 1892, e o depoimento *Porque escrevi O papel de parede amarelo*, de 1913. Neste, a autora relata sua experiência prévia e insatisfatória com um tratamento médico que inspirou a criação do conto. A escolha desta narrativa literária se fez não somente por suas qualidades, como também pela intersecção com o tema da desigualdade de gênero na saúde mental e no tratamento dirigido à mulher, direcionado pela ideologia de gênero. A partir

do contexto histórico, aponta-se o surgimento da psicologia profunda e de perspectivas psicológicas no tratamento das doenças mentais e a importância do desenvolvimento do pensamento junguiano em diálogo com outras áreas de conhecimento, como estudos sociais, feministas e literários. Afora o aspecto histórico e social, o artigo faz uma leitura psicológica do conto, ressaltando aspectos e temáticas conflitivas e símbolos alquímicos presentes nesta narrativa que, passados mais de um século, continua nos assombrando. ■

Palavras-chave: psicologia analítica, literatura, gênero, saúde mental, Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Resumen

Entre el orden y el desorden: la lectura del cuento “El empapelado amarillo” de Charlotte Perkins Gilman

El artículo se basa en dos textos de la escritora Charlotte Perkins Gilman, el cuento *El empapelado amarillo*, de 1892 y la afirmación *Por qué escribí El empapelado amarillo*, de 1913. En este, la autora relata su experiencia previa e insatisfactoria con el tratamiento médico, que inspiró la creación del cuento. La elección de esta narrativa literaria se hizo, no sólo por sus cualidades, sino también por la intersección con el tema de la desigualdad de género en la salud mental y en el trato dirigido a las mujeres, pautado por la ideología de género. Desde el con-

texto histórico, se señala el surgimiento de la psicología profunda y las perspectivas psicológicas en el tratamiento de la enfermedad mental y la importancia del desarrollo del pensamiento junguiano en diálogo con otras áreas del conocimiento, como los estudios sociales, feministas y literarios. Más allá del aspecto histórico y social, el artículo hace una lectura psicológica del relato, destacando aspectos y temas conflictivos y símbolos alquímicos presentes en esta narración que, después de más de un siglo, continúa obsesionándonos. ■

Palabras clave: psicología analítica, literatura, género, salud mental, Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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