



**“Dead Paper”: A Study of the Trauma of Therapeutic Fallacy in Gilman’s
“The Yellow Wallpaper”**

Aditi Bandyopadhyay

Abstract

Patriarchy is a multifaceted concept and when we examine it through feminist discourse, it loses its authority. Patriarchy aborts all avenues of individuation for women and engulfs her into the complex web of domesticity, thereby glorifying all forms of self-abnegation. A close study of the intertwined concepts of ‘marriage’ and ‘motherhood’ within the institution of patriarchy, gives birth to further research about the analysis of the inter-related concepts of ‘anonymity’ and ‘madness’ with respect to “the great confinement” of women. Literary accounts have often been the rich storehouses of the physical and emotional response of the patients and this has often been an eye opener to the medical professionals. Many autobiographical accounts examine and document the inhuman nature of the patriarchal modes of medical treatment given to women, especially in case of treating hysteria. This paper is a critical investigation into these interlocking concepts, as reflected in the autobiographical short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The story unveils the failure of the inhuman “rest cure” treatment suggested to the patients of postpartum depression. The therapeutic fallacy of the patriarchal modes of treatment prescribed for women, as revealed in the text under consideration, becomes even more complex when we view it through Foucauldian paradigms. Ironically, the traumatized unnamed woman narrator, who becomes the representative of nineteenth century women, rebels against patriarchy and ultimately finds her freedom through insanity. Accordingly, when we dissolve the patriarchal prejudices of gender-based binaries, “the great confinement” of the ‘feminine’ explodes and the ‘female’ is born.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Rest- Cure, Therapeutic fallacy, Trauma, Freedom.