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The One Who Got Away

The story "Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis" by Sigmund Freud, talks about hysteria and how doctors reacted towards it in Lecture I. There are two illnesses doctors had their mind on, organic illness and hysteria. Doctors would not show any sympathy towards their patient with hysteria; they would often push their patient aside simply because they had no knowledge of hysteria. Freud mentions Dr. Josef Breuer, who seemed to be the only doctor who treated patients with hysteria. He showed sympathy towards them by merely asking questions, listening to them, and believing in them. The short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is about a narrator who is married to her physician. She was told by her physician to take the 'rest cure,' she was told not to work or write. She was driven to become crazy because she had no interaction with the outside world and other people. After writing "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman writes a one-page response towards why she wrote the short story. "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" illustrates Freud's criticism of most doctors, that they know nothing about hysteria and does not show any compassion towards their patients.

The narrator's husband in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is John; he is also her doctor. John is aware that the narrator is not well, but he does not know what hysteria is. Because John is her husband, he knows what she likes to do the most, which is to write, but as her doctor, he tells her she is not allowed to write, forcing her to write in secret. Since she is not allowed to do anything, she is alone with her thoughts. Where she then start obsessing over things, like her condition at the beginning of the story to then obsessing over the wallpaper. That is when writing comes in and could have helped her clear her mind up. John sometimes shows some sympathy by showing he loves her, and saying he wants her to feel better, but as a doctor, he does not know how to say it and all he says to her is that there is nothing wrong with her. John says that because he is a layman, he cannot physically see hysteria, so he automatically assumes that she is okay, that it is all in her head.

Gilman mentions how the short story relates to her. She went to the doctors and spoke about her condition, what was going on with her, but her doctor just sent her home and told to take the 'rest cure.' He did not try to help her out or try to figure out why this was happening to her. She also mentions that her doctor told her not to go back to work and write because writing will make her worse. Gilman did as told, but only for three months, she then began to work and write. That is when "The Yellow Wallpaper" comes in; once she published the story, she sent a copy to the doctor. Gilman says, "he never acknowledged it," meaning the doctor admitted to his mistakes in telling her not to work or write.

In conclusion, both "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" shows some of Freud's criticism about doctors, saying they are layman and show no sympathy toward patients with hysteria. Gilman wrote this short story to help save other women's lives, women who went through the same thing she went through. She wanted to wake up with the world and talk about hysteria. During this time, doctors had little to no knowledge about hysteria or how badly this could have affected woman that had it. Moreover, because they did not know about it, they gave the wrong treatment. Women had to be active, not stay home, and try to be beautiful; they had to do something to take their minds off their illness.

**Cited Source Page:**

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**Reflection:**

Throughout my writing, I was split between two prompts, the first being “The Yellow Wallpaper” and lecture I or “A Rose for Emily” and lecture II. I had thought that the second option would be easier because that was the last thing we spoke about in class. But then I thought that it would be easier to write about both options to see which one sounds better, but I ended up only answering the first prompt. The reason why I chose to do the first prompt is because as I was writing, it was like I was on a roll, and I thought to myself, ‘I am definitely not going to do the second one.’ When I started talking about “The Yellow Wallpaper,” I was curious about whether there was a short play about this. I started looking for one, and one popped up, I saw it, and as I was watching it, it was more creeper than what I expected it to be. Once I spoke to someone about my paper, it made it easier to want to explain more without overexplaining it.

The purpose for this essay is not only to show how Freud’s first lecture of hysteria relates to “The Yellow Wallpaper” and “Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper” but to show that I understand this text on a higher level, not just a summary of the text. My audience is Professor Alyssa Yankwitt. I found it surprising how Freud’s first lecture of hysteria relates to “The Yellow Wallpaper” because who would have thought that the way John and other doctors treated patients with hysteria was not the right way. Who would have known how many lives could have been taken if Gilman did not write that story.