

# CULTURE VULTURE



## The Yellow Wallpaper By Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Grace Jappy explores this powerful short story.

*The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is possibly one of the most traumatizing short stories ever written. It was originally published in 1892 in the *New England Magazine*. This story follows the first person perspective of an anonymous woman who is put on bed rest by her husband after the birth of their child. She's struggling with what would now be known as postpartum depression, or postpartum psychosis based on where the story goes. Her husband is a physician who thinks that it would be best for her to stay in the countryside so that she has the best chance at recovering. It is clear that her husband is minimising what she's experiencing, but she simply says 'what is one to do'. Additionally she is not in control of what she eats, she's being medicated, and she mentions having to be sly if she wants to get any writing done, so really she isn't allowed to do anything. She's staying in a room in their summer mansion. The way she describes this room is quite alarming. She says the windows are barred and the wallpaper is torn, but she chalked it up to kids having stayed in the room before her. She comes back to the wallpaper often; she doesn't like the colour, she doesn't like the smell, and she really can't parse through the pattern. Her unhappiness from having to be confined to this room is evident, but she tries to justify it by saying her husband is just trying to help her and that she's glad it's her and not their child who has to stay in this room with this wallpaper. With nothing else to occupy her time she continuously focuses all her efforts on the wallpaper's pattern. The woman becomes increasingly more obsessed with the wallpaper, until she starts seeing moving figures within it. Whilst she believes this her husband continues to make light of her mental condition. Gradually she becomes convinced that there's a woman who is stuck underneath it. She also begins to believe that she can see this woman creeping outside of her window.

After consequently growing immensely irritated by the wallpaper, one night she tears it off in hopes to free the woman. But soon after comes to believe that she herself is in fact the woman who was trapped underneath. Her husband comes see what is going on, but she has already locked her door, refusing to let him in. Once he is finally able to get in he sees her creeping around the room. She berates him for trying to keep her stuck underneath the wallpaper, and with the complete shock of this he faints. She continues to creep around the room, and the story ends with her talking about how she had to step over him in order to continue pacing back and forth.

The author herself dealt with postpartum psychosis, making the personal connections to this story very clear. It speaks to the treatment of women at the time.

The story's clever writing forces the reader to witness the upsetting amount of control her husband has over what she could do on a daily basis. It is extremely frustrating the multiple times she tried to tell him that she wanted more, she displayed strong urges to go out and do something, but this was refused everytime. Despite her making clear how much she thinks this would help her, her husband just simply brushes it off.

Luckily, there had been vast amounts of progress since the story was first published. But it makes you wonder, how many people have been lost to time? Who struggled with these same issues and never got the help that they needed?

The short story was championed by women during the 19th century, as women during this time had very little autonomy over their physical and mental well being. Most women's complaints about their mental health were dismissed by male physicians as being irrational or hysterical. This story was seen as possibly one of the first steps to liberation from this.



## Who has copyright over ideas?

Mrs Ramsay muses over who has rights over ideas in the creative industries

Ed Sheeran is on trial in America over whether he copied Marvin Gaye's classic *Let's Get it On* for his hit *Thinking Out Loud*. The 32-year-old singer is being sued by the heirs of songwriter Ed Townsend, Gaye's co-writer on the 1973 single.

Reading about the trial and watching this fascinating clip by a musicologist on the BBC [website](#) raises the timeless question of how much of art is imitation? Sheeran may have subconsciously followed the chord progression used by Gaye because the sequence used is the bedrock of a number of other successful songs. Does that make him less of an original artist?

Similarly Shakespeare has been accused of 'stealing' ideas for his plays. It is true that most of his stories have come from elsewhere, whether it be Holinshed's historical chronicles, Decameron's stories or medieval fairy tales. Yet, he takes the same basic components and reworks them to create something new, altering the original to fit a new contemporary period or message.

Macbeth was not in fact a wicked king and Banquo was his partner in crime in overthrowing a weak King Duncan in Scottish [history](#) but Shakespeare had a message to share about regicide and a need to flatter his patron James 1st, Banquo's descendent.

And what of TV and film adaptations of classic novels? Where does copyright end with those texts whose writers are also dead and unable to comment? It seems with these, the opposite of Sheeran's situation is at

play. Where he is accused of taking someone's ideas and passing them off as his own, here some of the more recent adaptations are tarred with altering someone's original ideas beyond recognition.

The BBC has come in for some criticism of its latest adaptation of *Great Expectations*. Adapted by *Peaky Blinders* Stephen Knight, the series moves away from the original novel and adds additional scenes that do not happen in the book. The Evening Standard review commented 'It's not so much a dramatisation of *Great Expectations*, as a hollowing out of it in order to accommodate a very different story and almost unrecognisable characters.' With liberal use of the f-bomb and Miss Havisham a drug addled opium addict, for Dickens purists this is a step too far.

Similar accusations have been thrown at Netflix's adaptation of Austen's final completed novel *Persuasion*. A story of patience and gentle realisation of wrongs made, the Netflix series has its central protagonist as an impatient and outspoken modern woman whose speech idioms are far removed from regency England.

Recent adaptations of *David Copperfield* and *Emma* have met with more success and for what it's worth I highly recommend. This is perhaps because they stayed faithful to the themes, messages and characters of the story and offered dialogue that was lifted straight from the pages of the novels. Viewers were able to discover the humour of Dickens and Austen and the cracking plots and enjoy them anew.

Creating something new, reworking something older into something new or simply presenting something in a different medium is clearly always going to be a point of contention. Read the books and watch the adaptations, listen to the different songs and make your own judgement call on this one!



### LAST WEEK'S SONNET: Thinking Out Loud - Ed Sheeran

Can you guess the pop song from the Shakespearean sonnet? Correct answer in next week's Culture Vulture!

I had been a king, the world my own domain:  
e'en seas would rise when I gave the command.  
But loneliness and doubt usurped my reign -  
no sceptre but a broom's left in my hand.  
As I sweep out these empty streets, I think  
upon the ways in which I was deposed:  
my castles, built on sand, were made to sink  
and doors to tyrants shall in time be closed.  
But fonder mem'ries also come along:  
within my mind, I hear the joyful swells  
of soldiers lifting up their voice in song  
accomp'ied by the tolling of the bells.  
I see my banners once again unfurled:  
remembrances of when I ruled the world.



### The 2023 Met Gala

Miss Ramsay tells all about Monday's prestigious event

On the first Monday in May, eyes turn to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as designers all over the world get the opportunity to show off their work on the bodies of actors, models and stars. It is the one red carpet, where the emphasis is not placed on who is wearing what, but instead who is wearing who, with fashion - rather than celebrity scandal - becoming the forefront of the event. Each year, the gala is themed, which designers stick to in varying levels of stringency. This year the theme was Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty, after designer Karl Lagerfeld who passed away in 2019. Penélope Cruz, Michaela Coel, Roger Federer, Dua Lipa and Vogue's Anna Wintour acted as this year's chairs of the gala.

Lagerfeld was the creative director of French fashion house Chanel - a position he held from 1983 until his death in 2019. On Monday night, this was mirrored through the large turn out of celebrities in vintage Chanel, including Lizzo, Nicole Kidman and Naomi Campbell. Lagerfeld was also at the helm of Fendi, Patou, Balmain, Chloé and Tommy Hilfiger, making these recurring designs on Monday's red carpet. Some fashion designers opted to mirror Lagerfeld's signature colours of black and white. Responsible for consecrating the iconic black and white style of Chanel's branding, Lagerfeld chose to work within a visionary capacity in this medium. Design house Thom Browne (pictured) dressed all of their clients in black and white, making the pieces work well both individually and as a group. Designer Daniel Lee's new vision of Burberry saw his pieces pairing black, white and royal blue, with Stormy, Barry Keoghan, Skepta, and Dr. Dre all sporting individual - but matching - attire.

One cannot mention the 2023 Met without mentioning Jared Leto's outfit - a giant version of Lagerfeld's cat Choupette, Lil Nas X, who was painted in silver body paint and Doja Cat, who meowed at all of her interviewers with cat-like facial prosthetics.

This event and theme however has been more controversial than previous, due to Lagerfeld's personal views. Lagerfeld was notoriously homophobic, anti-immigrant, possibly homophobic and misogynistic, famously saying that he was 'fed up' with the #MeToo movement. Whilst this event presented a more cohesive celebration of fashion than previous years, it brings us back to the age old question - can you separate the art from the artist?



Recommended by a student:

**The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes - Suzanne Collins**

"As a prequel to the Hunger Games with President Snow as the main character (before he was President Snow), this book doesn't really need much of an introduction - but it's an amazing story, and the film is coming out later this year." *The trailer for the upcoming film has now been released with the film set to hit cinemas on 17th November 2023*

### Soundtrack to the week:

This week's soundtrack to the week has been built by editors and readers. If you would like to have your say, follow the QR code on page 5!

MONDAY: Recommended by a student

**Mirror Talk - Griff**



TUESDAY:

Recommended by Caitlin Berrill

**Let the Light in - Lana Del Ray**



WEDNESDAY:

Recommended by a student

**From Ritz to Rubble - Arctic Monkeys**



WEDNESDAY:

Recommended by Christopher Sirrell

**Nights - Frank Ocean**



FRIDAY: Recommended by a student

**Rhythm of the Night - De Barge**



SATURDAY:

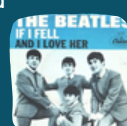
Recommended by Sam Barnes

**Common People - Pulp**



SUNDAY: Recommended by Mrs Westby

**If I Fell - The Beatles**







## Glenn Gould and Bach; the Goldberg Variations.

**Molly Shillinglaw reviews Gould's performance of Bach and what makes it stand out.**

Few pianists are so closely associated with a particular composer as Gould is with Bach. Upon the release of his recording of the Goldberg Variations in 1955, Gould's immediate praise and controversy established him as a talent within the classical music community. Born in Toronto as Glenn Gold, his parents later changed the family name to avoid the pre-war anti-semitism that plagued the area, his interest in music was visible at a very early age and he attended music school from age 10. His father fashioned him a chair that allowed him to pull down on the keys rather than strike them from above, he took this chair with him almost everywhere: never playing without it. Whilst studying music, Gould developed a technique that allowed him to play at a speed not typical of other pianists at the time, he seemed to have a certain control over the keyboard whereby he was able to retain the clarity of each note even when playing at a fast tempo.

He was somewhat of a prodigy when he was young, preferring to read music rather than practice playing the piano itself. He played in public for the first time at age 5 and first appeared alongside a orchestra at 13. In 1957, he became the first American to play in the Soviet Union since WW2, a remarkable moment in which he played the music that had been suppressed under the era of Socialist Realism (namely Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg). He retired from concert performance fairly early as he considered it to be 'a force of evil'. According to Gould, concert performance created competition and a non-empathetic audience. His final performance took place in 1964 where he played Beethoven, Bach and Hindesmith. He played fewer than 200 concerts in his lifetime.

He was widely known for his eccentricity whilst playing, often humming and singing whilst he played. Audio engineers were not always successful in removing the excess audio from his recordings. Alongside this, it was typical for Gould to make peculiar body movements. Initially, he was criticised for his playing habits with listeners citing his humming as intolerable at times. However, he is now often remembered for his unique style with some appreciating his unconventional style. Conductor and frequent collaborator Leonard Bernstein stated that 'there's no one quite like him'.

Towards the end of his life, in 1981, Gould re-recorded the Goldberg variations. This solidified the relationship between him and Bach's music. His initial recording in 1955 was somewhat controversial, Gould re-interpreted the variations and played them at a much faster tempo than they had been before. The 1981 recording was much more deliberate and is perhaps lacking the ferocity and excitement of his original recordings. Gould himself stated that he 'could no longer recognise the person who did that' when talking about his original recordings. His criticism of his initial performance may be aide for his decision to re-record the variations with a more calculated ornamentation.

Overall, Gould is remembered for his immense control over the piano which was unlike anyone of his time, contradictory to his exciting and almost experimental style.



# WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

As the weeks progress, we are hoping Culture Vulture will become jam-packed with student articles, recommendations and reviews. If you would like to make your own creative suggestion, or have a piece of work that you would like to see in the next magazine, scan the QR code.



Alternatively, if you would like to contribute an article, film, album, book or podcast review, or have an itching to write a features piece about a current cultural affair, email [aramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk](mailto:aramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk) with your idea and they can point you in the right direction. Who knows - you may see your name in print!

Make sure to encourage your tutors and friends to get involved, and let's make creativity central to the Gordano Sixth Form experience!

