

*The Literature of Prescription:  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman and*

**The Yellow  
Wall  
Paper**

*An Exhibition at Booth Library,  
Eastern Illinois University  
September 23 - November 2, 2013*

**THE LITERATURE OF PRESCRIPTION**  
CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN AND "THE YELLOW WALL-PAPER"



**An exhibition hosted by Booth Library, Eastern Illinois University  
September 23 through November 2, 2013**

This exhibit was developed and produced  
by the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health

[www.library.eiu.edu](http://www.library.eiu.edu)



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*The Yellow Wall-Paper's* narrator and her caretaker, Jennie.

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# Welcome

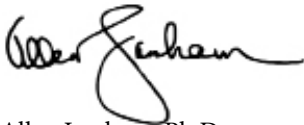
Dear Friends,

Booth Library welcomes you to our latest traveling exhibit, *The Literature of Prescription: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and "The Yellow Wall-Paper."* This exhibit examines a 19th-century writer's criticism of the medical profession and the relationship between science and society.

This traveling exhibit comes to us from the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. The historical materials highlighted in the traveling exhibit come from the collections of the History of Medicine Division of the National Library of Medicine. In addition, Booth Library faculty and staff members have created several exhibits on related topics such as the "rest cure," women's equality, the design of 19th-century wallpaper, and female authors who wrote their memoirs based on personal journals or diaries.

Scholars from the fields of literature, medicine, history, mental illness and art will be offering their unique perspectives during this program series. In addition, we hope you will participate in a discussion of Gilman's short story, *The Yellow Wall-Paper*. I extend thanks to my colleagues who are participating in this exhibit and program series. We are indebted to our partner organizations and share their dedication for bringing focus to the interrelations between arts and sciences.

Best wishes,



Allen Lanham, Ph.D.  
Dean of Library Services



**THE LITERATURE OF PRESCRIPTION**  
CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN AND "THE YELLOW WALL-PAPER"



# Opening Reception

Tuesday, September 24, 2013, 7 p.m.  
Booth Library West Reading Room

## Welcome

Allen Lanham, Dean of Library Services

## Greetings

Blair Lord, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

## Recognition of Faculty Presenters and Curators

Melissa Caldwell, Assistant Professor of English  
and Chairwoman, Library Advisory Board

## Closing

Dean Lanham

## Light Refreshments



# Opening Program

7:30 p.m., Booth Library West Reading Room

## ***Lingering Pigment: The Place of Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-Paper' in the 20th and 21st Centuries***

***Presenter: Kim Hunter-Perkins***

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, the narrator exclaims, "I don't know why I should write this." Today, we might ask, why should we read this? *The Yellow Wall-Paper* has become a touchstone literary text taught in a variety of classrooms — from high school through university. Further, it remains an intriguing tale, one critics like Catherine Golden refer to as "Poe-esque" in its horror and on par with James Russell Lowell's civil satires — firmly establishing Gilman's bona fides as a member of the earlier 19th-century canon.



As a short story, an example of 19th-century women's writing, and for its timely perspective on medicine and psychology, *Wall-Paper* remains eminently teachable and readable for a variety of audiences. This presentation will explore how the story appeals to such a wide variety of readers and educators, as well as what literary scholars continue to find so intriguing about such a short text. Further, it will explore how Gilman's work fits into, as well as diverges from, the literary traditions that critics have attempted to situate it within.

***Kim Hunter-Perkins*** is an instructor at Purdue University, where she is working toward a Ph.D. in early to 19th-century American literature. She received an M.A. and B.A. from Eastern Illinois University. Her research focuses on antebellum war discourse and civil/military satire, as well as the impact of multi-media on perceptions of war and gender through the 19th century.



# Programs

**Tuesday, Oct. 1, 4 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Pregnancy Showing: Fictional Pregnancy in the Era of Charlotte Perkins Gilman***  
***Parley Ann Boswell, Professor of English***

Pregnancy represents one of the most challenging, complicated and ultimately compelling of all fictional elements. American authors had to obscure the details of fictional pregnancy until the turn of the 20th century; but especially as women began publishing more fiction, pregnancy began to show. We will explore how fictional pregnancy began to enrich American literature during Gilman's time by looking at pregnancy fiction by Harriet Jacobs, Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton and Gilman herself. These and other writers contributed to the birth of the American pregnancy narrative and influenced many later writers and filmmakers.



*Parley Ann Boswell* teaches American literature from the colonial period through the early 20th century, and film studies courses at EIU. She has published on popular literature from the colonial period through 21st-century Hollywood culture. Her forthcoming book, *Pregnancy in Film and Literature*, will be published in 2014.

**Monday, Oct. 7, 7 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Film Screening: 'Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Yellow Wall-Paper'***

***Introduction by David Bell, Professor in Reference Services, Booth Library***

*BBC Worldwide, directed by John Clive.* Touted as one of the first major feminist writers, Charlotte Perkins Gilman spent her life fighting to liberate women from the yoke of domesticity. This film is a stunning dramatization of Gilman's autobiographical account of a woman driven to madness by the repressive mores of Victorian culture. (1998, 76 minutes)



*David Bell* is a reference librarian at Booth Library. He earned an M.S. in library and information science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an M.A. in English literature at Northern Illinois University.



**Thursday, Oct. 10, 7 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Seeing Remnants of ‘The Yellow Wall-Paper’ in Works by Female Artists***

***Mary Caroline Simpson, Assistant Professor of Art***

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s own struggle with depression, a condition worsened by prescribed bed rest, compelled her to write *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, an influential short story that for some scholars exemplifies a feminist gothic sensibility. Rather than dwell on attempts by female artists to illustrate Gilman’s story, this lecture considers metaphors of confinement, repression, anger and desired freedom as expressed in artistic works by Dorothea Tanning, Francesca Woodman and Louise Bourgeois, among others, both within a feminist context and in light of evolved definitions of depression and its treatment.

***Mary Caroline Simpson*** has a doctorate in art history from Indiana University-Bloomington and is an assistant professor at Eastern, where she teaches courses on the history of European and American art since 1800. Her research examines how Chicago’s museums, arts societies and collectors played important, but still under recognized, roles in the process of legitimizing different strains of modernist art both in the United States and internationally between 1945 and 1970.



**Monday, Oct. 14, 4 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Depression: Symptoms and How to Get Help***

***Jacquelyn Hines, Associate Director, Eastern Illinois University Counseling Center***

This presentation will discuss signs and symptoms of depression, as well as resources on campus and how to get help for yourself or a loved one.

***The Counseling Center*** provides personal counseling to more than 600 undergraduate and graduate students each year at Eastern. The center is staffed by psychologists, counselors and graduate students, and the services rendered to students are free, voluntary and confidential. The center’s staff is dedicated to assisting students in their pursuit of personal and academic growth, to helping students gain a better understanding and appreciation of themselves, and to supporting students as they make important decisions about their lives.





**Tuesday, Oct. 22, 7 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Prescribing Reproduction: Abortion, Female Monthly Pills  
and Tacit Acceptance in the late 19th Century***

***Jeannie Ludlow, Coordinator of Women's Studies***

The late 19th century saw great changes in women's real-life experiences with birth control and abortion. While the American Medical Association worked toward medicalization of women's reproductive options and criminalization of abortion, many practitioners — both lay and professional — continued to help women realize their own reproductive decisions. This presentation will look at the political, medical and social contexts of women's reproductivity, as well as the practices of birth control and abortion during Gilman's adulthood.



***Jeannie Ludlow*** is associate professor of English and coordinator of Women's Studies at Eastern Illinois University and a former abortion care worker. Her publications include "Sometimes, It's a Child and a Choice: Toward an Embodied Abortion Praxis" in the *National Women Studies Association Journal* and "Love and Goodness: Toward a New Abortion Politics" in *Feminist Studies*. Her research focuses on discourses of abortion and reproductive justice activism in the U.S. Ludlow is also secretary of the board of the Abortion Conversation Project and a member of the Abortion Care Network. She has a Ph.D. in American culture studies from Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

**Tuesday, Oct. 29, 4 p.m.**

**Witters Conference Room 4440, Booth Library**

***Book Discussion: 'The Yellow Wall-Paper'***

***Led by Janice Derr, Assistant Professor in Reference Services, Booth Library***

*The Yellow Wall-Paper* can be interpreted in many ways, and Booth Library invites you to share your views on the story. We hope to have a lively discussion on the themes in the story and touch on some of the different interpretations of the work. All are welcome to attend. To prepare for the discussion, the library has several copies of the story available for checkout, and the story can be read online at [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1952](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1952).

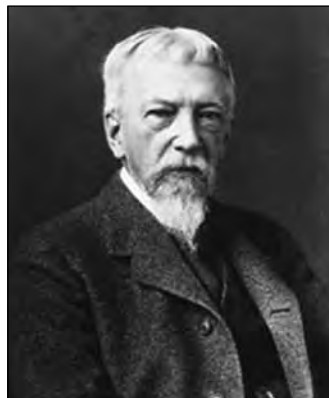


# Related Exhibits at Booth Library

## ***Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Her Life and Times***

### ***North Lobby***

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's life spanned from 1860 to 1935. As a noted figure in the Progressive Movement, Gilman worked for gender equality and suffrage. This exhibit highlights the societal changes she lived through and helped bring about. *Stacey Knight-Davis, curator*



Charlotte Perkins at the age of 14, 1874, and Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, author and physician, 1913.

## ***The 'Rest Cure' in Perspective***

### ***North Lobby***

Views on depression, and how to treat it, have changed dramatically over time. The history of the “rest cure” during the publication of *The Yellow Wall-Paper* is explored in the context of the treatments that came before and after it. *Stacey Knight-Davis, curator*





## ***The Dynamic Reading Life of Charlotte Perkins Gilman***

***Marvin Foyer***

Reading was an integral part of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's life. She routinely recorded the titles of the books she was reading in her diaries and correspondence letters. These books reflected her beliefs, her research and her interests. Subsequently, they highlight facets of her personality and inward struggles, as well as reveal familial and social influences on her reading. The books Gilman chose stand as a colorful representation of "woman" in the late 19th century, and encompass an array of beliefs across the spectrum with which Gilman struggled, denounced or championed her entire life. *Lee Whitacre, curator*

## ***Ink of Truth: A Personal Journey***

***Marvin Foyer***

Dr. S. Weir Mitchell prescribed the "rest cure" to Charlotte Perkins Gilman to improve her mental health, and as part of the program she was told to abstain from writing in her journal. This exhibit features female authors who recorded their experiences with mental illness and later wrote their memoirs based on many years of diary or journal entries. *Johna Von Behrens, curator*



## ***The Works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman***

***Marvin Foyer***

Though perhaps best known for her semi-autobiographical short story, *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote short stories, novels, non-fiction, poetry and created her own magazine, *The Forerunner*. This exhibit provides an overview of Gilman's prolific literary career. *Janice Derr, curator*



## ***Wallpaper Mania***

***Marvin Foyer***

Presenting selected examples of period wallpaper based on the descriptions of the narrator in Gilman's story, this exhibit explores the design and domestic role of wallpaper in the late 19th century, with a multidisciplinary inquiry into the physiological and psychological effects of visual stimuli such as color and pattern. *Ellen Corrigan, curator*



## ***Bed Rest: The Modern Legacy of ‘The Rest Cure’***

***Marvin Foyer***

Although there is little clinical evidence to support it, bed rest is commonly prescribed for many complications of pregnancy. This poster summarizes recent research on the relationship between bed rest and negative quality of life. *Stacey Knight-Davis, curator*



## ***The Road to Equality***

***Reference Hallway***

The “rest cure” was based on the idea that women were weaker and more limited in their abilities than men. Charlotte Perkins Gilman fought against this idea and became an important figure in the women’s movement. This exhibit highlights key moments in the struggle for women’s equality, including voting rights, equal pay for equal work and health care. Key resources from Booth Library’s collections on gender equality also are featured. *Janice Derr, curator*

## ***The Big Room with that Horrid Paper***

***Atrium***

A corner of the room described in *The Yellow Wall-Paper* is recreated in the Atrium. Visitors are invited to step inside and experience being surrounded by the pattern. *Johna Von Behrens and Stacey Knight-Davis, curators*



## ***Through a Critical Lens***

***South Lobby***

From Gilman’s own response to the story written in 1913 to essays written nearly 100 years later, this exhibit explores different critical interpretations of *The Yellow Wall-Paper*. *Lee Whitacre and Stacey Knight-Davis, curators*



# Curators

**Ellen Kathryn Corrigan** is an assistant professor in Cataloging Services at Booth Library. She has an M.L.S. and an M.A. in art history, both from the University of Maryland.

**Janice Derr** is an assistant professor in Reference Services at Booth Library and subject specialist for business. She received an M.L.I.S. from the University of Missouri-Columbia and an M.A. in English literature from Eastern Illinois University.



*The Yellow Wall-Paper's* narrator and her husband, who has fainted after finding her in deep distress.

**Stacey Knight-Davis** is an associate professor, head of Library Technology Services and subject librarian for health studies and nursing at Booth Library. She has an M.L.I.S. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an M.S. in technology from Eastern Illinois University.

**Johna Von Behrens** is a senior library specialist in University Archives and Reference Services. She has a B.A. and an M.S. in educational administration from Eastern Illinois University, a certificate in special collections from the University of Illinois, and is working on an M.S. in library science at Drexel University.

**Lee Whitacre** has a B.A. degree in English with a minor in creative writing from Eastern Illinois University. She serves as senior library specialist in Acquisitions at Booth Library. Prior to that, she was the library director at the Martinsville Public Library District.





# Selected Local Resources for Further Study

Compiled by Janice Derr, Booth Library Reference Services

## Written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman:

<i>“The Yellow Wall-Paper” and Selected Stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 A6 1994
<i>Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Nonfiction Reader.....</i>	Stacks HQ1413 .G54 A3 1991
<i>Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s The Yellow Wall-Paper: A Sourcebook &amp; Critical Edition.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 Y45 2004
<i>Herland and Selected Stories.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 H4 1992x
<i>Herland, The Yellow Wall-Paper, and Selected Writings.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 A6 1999a
<i>The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader: The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Fiction.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 A15 1981x
<i>The Crucx.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 C78 2003
<i>The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z465 1994
<i>The Dress of Women: A Critical Introduction to the Symbolism &amp; Sociology of Clothing.....</i>	Stacks HM511 .G55 2002
<i>The Home; Its Work and Influence.....</i>	Stacks HQ734 .G5 1972x
<i>The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman; An Autobiography.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z5 1972
<i>The Yellow Wall-Paper, and Other Stories.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 A6 1995
<i>With Her in Ourland: Sequel to Herland.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 W5 1997b
<i>Women and Economics.....</i>	Stacks HQ1426 .G45 1966
<i>The Selected Letters of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.....</i>	Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z48 2009

## Anthologies containing Gilman’s work:

<i>A Book of the Short Story.....</i>	Stacks PN6014 .C69x
<i>American Protest Literature.....</i>	Stacks HN90 .R3 A6754 2006
<i>American Short Stories.....</i>	BTC PS645 .A64 2002x
<i>Available Means: An Anthology of Women’s Rhetoric(s).....</i>	Stacks PN6122 .A85 2001
<i>Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women Before 1950.....</i>	Stacks PS648 .U85 D37 1995
<i>Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings.....</i>	Stacks HQ1154 .S29
<i>Our Changing Morality: A Symposium.....</i>	Stacks HQ1221 .K5 1930x
<i>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings.....</i>	Stacks HM51 .S66235 1993
<i>The Great Modern American Stories: An Anthology.....</i>	Stacks PS645 .H6x



## Biography and Criticism:

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Making of a Radical Feminist, 1860-1896*.....Stacks HQ1413 .G54 H54
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work*.....Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z63 2010x
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her Contemporaries: Literary & Intellectual Contexts*.....Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z6 2004
- Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*.....Stacks HQ1154 .D538 1983
- Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative*.....Stacks PN56 .F46 F46 1990
- Guide to the Gothic III: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1994-2003*.....REF Z5917 .G66 F74 2005
- Literary Feminisms*.....Stacks PR119 .R63 2000
- Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*.....Stacks HQ1075.5 .U6 B43 1996x
- Metamorphosis and the Emergence of the Feminine: A Motif of "Difference" in Women's Writing*.....Stacks PS151 .M46 1999
- Modern American Women Writers*.....REF PS151 .M54 1991
- Nine Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition*.....REF HQ1412 .N53 2002
- Out of Her Mind: Women Writing on Madness*.....Stacks PS648 .M38 O98 2000
- Reading Women's Worlds from Christine de Pizan to Doris Lessing: A Guide to Six Centuries of Women Writers Imagining Rooms of Their Own*.....Stacks PN471 .J36 2011
- Scare Tactics: Supernatural Fiction by American Women*.....Stacks PS374 .W6 W38 2008
- The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism*.....Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z56 2009
- The Oven Birds: American Women on Womanhood, 1820-1920*.....REF HQ1426 .P35
- Unruly Tongue: Identity and Voice in American Women's Writing, 1850-1930*.....Stacks PS374 .F45 C87 1999
- Wild Unrest: Charlotte Perkins Gilman & the Making of "The Yellow Wall-Paper"*.....Stacks PS1744 .G57 Z69 2010
- Women and Womanhood in America*.....Stacks E169.1 .P897 v.42

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*"Live as domestic a life as possible ... And never touch pen, brush, or pencil as long as you live."*

--Gilman describes Dr. Mitchell's advice (1913)--



Dr. S. Weir Mitchell,  
author and  
physician, 1906

# Credits

## Booth Library Project Team:

Stacey Knight-Davis, editor, cover graphics,  
planning committee  
Janice Derr, planning committee  
Johna Von Behrens, planning committee  
Allen Lanham, dean of Library Services  
Beth Heldebrandt, editor, graphic design, publicity

Arlene Brown, library administration  
Christine Derrickson, library administration  
Peggy Manley, library administration  
Beverly Cruse, Media Services, local exhibit support  
Marlene Slough, proofreader

## Image Credits:

Cover art: adapted from *The Yellow Wall Paper*, Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1899. Cover designed by Elisha Brown Bird (1867–1943).

Back cover photo: Charlotte Perkins Gilman writing at her desk, circa 1916-1922. Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Page 1: The story's narrator, imprisoned in her room. *New England Magazine*, January 1892.

Page 2: The story's narrator and her caretaker, Jennie. *New England Magazine*, January 1892.

Page 5: *The Yellow Wall-Paper*. *New England Magazine*, January 1892.

Page 9: Charlotte Perkins at the age of 14 in 1874. Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, author and physician, 1913.

Page 10: Charlotte Perkins Gilman reading. *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*, D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1935.

Page 11: Mrs. J. Hardy Stubbs, Miss Ida Craft, Miss Rosalie Jones, circa 1912-1913. Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress.

Page 12: The story's narrator and her husband, who has fainted after finding her in deep distress. *New England Magazine*, January 1892.

Page 14: Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, author and physician, 1906.

Unless otherwise noted, all images and graphics are courtesy of the National Library of Medicine or are part of the Booth Library collection.

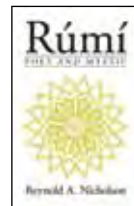


# Coming Soon

## to Booth Library, January–April 2014



Learn more about the people, places, history, faith and cultures of Muslims in the United States and around the world. A five-part, scholar-led book discussion series will center on the theme *Pathways of Faith*. A limited number of free books will be available to interested participants. *Muslim Journeys* programming will include film screenings and panel discussions. Programs will be open to all in the community.



*Muslim Journeys* is a project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, conducted in cooperation with the American Library Association and the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University. Major support for the Muslim Journeys Bookshelf was provided by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. Additional support for the arts and media components was provided by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. Local support is provided by Booth Library, the Academy of Lifelong Learning and Eastern's Interdisciplinary Center for Global Diversity.



Booth Library







The story "was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked."

Gilman, *The Forerunner* (1913)



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& HUMAN SERVICES