

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER



A NEW CHAMBER OPERA BY
BROOKE DEROSA, COMPOSER
DIANA FARRELL, LIBRETTIST
CARL PANTLE, CONDUCTOR & PIANIST
CYNTHIA STOKES, STAGE DIRECTOR



PRODUCTION PREMIERE: OCT 24-26, 2025
PHANTOM PROJECTS THEATRE, LA HABRA

Director's Notes by Cynthia Stokes

The first time I read American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, I was in seventh grade. It was given to me by my paternal grandmother, who adored me. I am sure she had thoroughly vetted this story as important literature for my young mind. My grandmother, born at the end of the 19th century, understood this story in ways I can only begin to imagine, she suffered from crippling arthritis her entire life. Now, as a woman of her age, I have the opportunity to revisit this novella, reimagined as a new opera. Gilman's powerful writing—and its adaptation for the stage—resonates deeply, particularly through the lens of today.

Invisible diseases of the body and mind remain under-researched even now. These conditions, which disproportionately affect women, are still dismissed time and again. Too often, they are attributed to perceived flaws in the patient's character, upbringing, or emotions rather than being properly investigated and treated. This societal disregard for "invisible" suffering has far-reaching consequences, including the destruction of families and the ripple effects on children and grandchildren.

In the 19th century, physician and pharmacist Mary Putnam Jacobi was a trailblazer in investigating and advocating for the recognition and treatment of these invisible diseases. Jacobi rejected the prevailing medical myths of her time, particularly those that framed women's illnesses as a result of inherent frailty or excessive emotion. Her landmark essay, *The Question of Rest for Women During Menstruation*, challenged the popular notion that women were debilitated during their menstrual cycles. Through rigorous scientific research, she demonstrated that women were fully capable of leading active lives, countering the pseudoscientific claims used to justify the marginalization of women. Jacobi's work laid a foundation for future generations to challenge biases in medicine, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based research over cultural stereotypes.

The legacy of women like Gilman and Jacobi reminds us of the enduring need to advocate for the proper recognition and treatment of diseases that remain unseen but deeply felt. Their work continues to inspire efforts to dismantle the prejudices that perpetuate suffering and inequality.

Composer's Notes by Brooke deRosa

The music for *The Yellow Wallpaper* explores the widest emotional range I've composed so far. It begins with lush, elegant melodies that evoke a sense of serenity and beauty, but as the narrative unfolds, those same melodies become increasingly warped and distorted, mirroring Jane's unraveling psyche as she endures the torment of her prescribed "rest cure." With each repetition, the music subtly shifts—growing more dissonant and unsettling, pushing the vocal and instrumental lines into progressively less comfortable regions. This creates a physical and emotional tension for both the performer and the listener, as the once-recognizable themes degrade into something wholly unfamiliar and eerie.

I consider this piece more of a cinematic horror opera, as the leitmotifs not only define specific characters but also embody the oppressive setting and underscore pivotal actions. The interplay between the melodic transformation and Jane's psychological descent makes the music an active participant in the storytelling, heightening the sense of dread and confinement that permeates the work.

Librettist's Notes by Diana Farrell

The Yellow Wallpaper has been a part of my artistic journey since I first read it over twenty years ago. Now, as a mother of two, I find its themes more relevant than ever. Witnessing women in our country gradually lose access to essential healthcare has added a deeper urgency to this work. My focus was on shaping characters who could

illustrate Gilman's story for multiple generations without losing its essence. Writing the poetic and cryptic text for Jane was wholly based on Gilman's words and my own interpretation. However, John, the physician husband, and Jenney, the housemaid, are pivotal to the opera but have no spoken lines in the original text. Bringing them to life required imagining how their actions and words might reflect the societal pressures and medical debates of their time. Jenney, in particular, represents the growing suffragette movement—initially trusting the authority of medical professionals society revered but eventually questioning the reality she witnesses firsthand. John, on the other hand, embodies the paternalism that drives Jane further into her downward spiral and served as a logical messenger for the quotations of physicians from the late 19th century.

This opera is not a medical dissertation but art inspired by unsettling parallels between Gilman's time and today. The "rest cure" devised by Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell was both pseudoscientific and deeply harmful, particularly to women. In contrast, Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi rigorously disproved its efficacy, yet her work was ignored on the basis of her sex. These historical voices appear in the libretto, juxtaposed to show how - far? - we've come as a society.

While the story's Gilded Age setting is steeped in horror and suspense, its themes remain unnervingly relevant. Women are still fighting for control over their bodies and health. Writing this opera has been a way to channel that frustration into something meaningful, amplifying the voices that history has too often silenced.

EVENING CAST

John, a physician	Sergio Manzo
Jane, his wife	Jill Morgan Brenner
Jenney, the maid	Brooke Iva Lohman
The Women:	Shannon Delijani & Rachel Yeo

MATINEE CAST

John, a physician	Michael O'Halloran
Jane, his wife	Diana Farrell
Jenney, the maid	Brooke deRosa
The Women:	Shannon Delijani & Rachel Yeo

ORCHESTRA

Carl Pantle	Conductor, Piano
Rob Schumitsky	Violin
Alice Ping	Viola
Erin Greene	Cello
Sierra Schmeltzer	Flute
Phil O'Connor	Clarinet

CREATIVE TEAM

Stage Director	Cynthia Stokes
Technical Director:	Grant Cronish
Stage Manager:	Kristin Serena
Projections	Violet Costales

PLOT

SETTING: June - July 1881, Eastern Pennsylvania,
A well-worn room in a summer country estate.

Week 1, Day 1: John and Jane arrive at their summer retreat, where Jane begins the rest cure treatment prescribed by Dr. Silas “Weir” Mitchell. The household is hopeful for her recovery.

Week 2, Day 10 : As routines take shape, it becomes clear that Jane is not fully informed about the details of her treatment.

Week 3, Day 18: John, frustrated by Jane’s resistance, asserts control after catching her writing. Jane becomes captivated by the unsettling pattern in the wallpaper, aided by her prescribed medications.

Week 4, Day 27: Tensions rise as doubts about the rest cure surface. John questions the conflicting medical theories, while Jenney worries about her role in the cure. Meanwhile, Jane discovers solace in an enigmatic presence.

Week 5, Day 32: John is reprimanded by Weir Mitchell for questioning his methods and giving credence to a female physician’s science. John finds Jane sleeping in the grass after a desperate attempt to leave her room. Jenney fears for Jane’s well being.

Week 6, Day 41: John receives final instructions from Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell. Jane no longer discerns between herself and the woman in the wall. Slipping between reality and delusion, she resolves to free herself—and all the other women trapped in the wallpaper.

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Brooke Iva Lohman, Singing Jenney



Hailed as witty, adorable, and one to watch, soprano Brooke Iva Lohman is gaining recognition for her clear, high range and compelling character portrayals. Recent roles include Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Zerbinetta (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), and Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*). She has performed with LA

Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Pacific Opera Project, and other companies across California. Most recently, she sang the soprano solos in Orff’s *Carmina Burana* and was featured as the soprano soloist in the world premiere of *The Turning Point* by composer Sherry Blevins. Brooke lives in Altadena, California, with her husband and three cats.

Jill Morgan Brenner, Singing Jane



Dramatic soprano Jill Morgan Brenner brings “vivid tone and expressive elegance” (SF Chronicle) to diverse operatic roles including Elektra (Strauss), Lady Macbeth (Verdi), Donna Anna (Mozart), and the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*. A champion of contemporary opera, she has originated roles in multiple world premieres and founded I Sing Words: The Poetry Project, commissioning new art songs. She

maintains an active private teaching studio in Sonoma County, mentoring the next generation of vocal artists.



Sergio Manzo, Singing John

Baritone Sergio Manzo has been praised for his “divine and natural voice” (von Otter Masterclass) and lauded for roles spanning comic brilliance to lyrical depth. Recent acclaim includes his Pilot in *The Little Prince*, sung with “vocal gravitas” and “rich emotion” (Rutland Herald), Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*, noted for “powerful voice” and vulnerability (Rutland Herald), and the Padre in *Don Quixote*, praised for “vocal sensitivity.” He has appeared with Opera North, Fort Worth Opera, and Pacific Opera Project. Based in Southern California, Manzo is dedicated to bringing both classic and contemporary opera to new and diverse audiences.



Rachel Yeo, Covering Jenney

Rachel Yeo, a classically trained soprano and Los Angeles native, brings vibrant artistry to opera, concert, and choral music. In 2025, she joined the LA Opera Chorus for *Ainadamar*. Recent roles include Ngon Hong in *On Gold Mountain* (LA Opera Connects), Soeur Constance in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and Kiyohime in the workshop of *Dojyoji* at Boston Court Pasadena. She has appeared as soprano soloist in Bach's *Magnificat*, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, and Charpentier's *Messe de Minuit*, and presented recitals through Northridge at Noon and Pacific Opera Project's Artist Recital Series. Rachel also performs with the GRAMMY®-winning ensemble Tonicity and toured Japan with the Roger Wagner Chorale.



Shannon Delijani, Covering Jane

Shannon Delijani is an Iranian-American mezzo-soprano and multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. Praised for her rich tone and emotional depth, she is equally at home in opera, concert rep, and contemporary music. Recent performances include solo appearances with the Charleston Symphony, as well as the world premieres of *UMBRA* by Elliot Menard and *Welcome to the Madness* by Leanna Kirchhoff with Opera Steamboat, where she portrayed Charlotte Perry. Other notable roles include Larina in *Eugene Onegin* with Heartbeat Opera and Arbace in *Idaspe* with Quantum Theater. Shannon is the creator of *Homeland*, an ongoing recital project exploring identity, displacement, and belonging through the lens of the Iranian-Jewish diaspora.



Brooke deRosa, Composer, Singing Jenney

Brooke deRosa is an award-winning composer, conductor, vocalist, and filmmaker, living in Los Angeles, California. Brooke's first opera, *The Monkey's Paw*, premiered in 2017 in Los Angeles with Pacific Opera Project. In 2018 Brooke orchestrated and conducted Rossini's opera *La Gazzetta* for Pacific Opera Project. This included re-creating the famous “missing quintet”, absent from the opera. Her 2019 operetta *Gunfight at the Not-So-OK Saloon*, a musical comedy set in the old Wild West, premiered to sold out audiences as

part of the Hollywood Fringe Festival. "Gunfight" garnered three awards: "Pick of the Fringe", "The Encore Producer's Award" and "The John Raitt Award for Best Music and Lyrics." In 2020 she was commissioned by LA Opera to write *Songs of Orpheus*; art songs based on poetry from veterans in conjunction with the Mindful Veteran Project. This song cycle premiered in 2020 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and in 2021 and 2022, Brooke created additional song cycles for LA Opera. These songs were prominently featured on soprano Renee Fleming's show "Music and the Mind." She recently finished writing music for an opera, *An Elephant Never Forgets*, also for LA Opera. Her opera *Does Not Compute: a Love Story*, about the future of AI and humanity premiered in May of 2023 with MC Arts, and her opera *Alice in Wonderland*, written with librettist Paige Lehnert saw its world premiere at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre in April of 2024.

Her *Valzer di Carnevale* premiered with the Culver City Symphony in 2023, and her aria "Off With Their Heads" was performed at the Grammy Museum in 2024. She conducted the premiere of her concert work *Public Enemy* in the 2017 concert, "The Future is Female." She later conducted and recorded this work with an 67-piece orchestra as part of the Los Angeles Film Conducting Intensive.

As an internationally accomplished opera performer, she has been featured on Jimmy Fallon, the Jimmy Kimmel stage, the score for Netflix/Marvel's "Luke Cage", and "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events", also for Netflix. She has performed in Los Angeles with LA Opera, Pacific Opera Project, The Pacific Symphony, The San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra, The Redlands Symphony and Long Beach Opera. She has performed at Greystone Mansion, in private salons and concerts for writer Gore Vidal, and has performed her own music at the Grammy Museum.



Diana Farrell, Librettist, Singing Jane

A winner of the 2023 American Prize, Women in Opera Division and 2023 AIMS in Gratz Vocal Competition, American lyric spinto soprano, Diana Farrell, has been hailed for her "golden voice." She is best known for her portrayal of the titular role of Puccini's *Tosca*, Magda in Menotti's *The Consul*, Jake's Heggie's Krystyna Zywulska (a winner of the 2024 American Prize), and Verdi's Lady Macbeth, when her "passionate intensity..." earned high praise as she "consistently sang with beauty and sensitivity." In 2022, she made company debuts with San Diego Opera, Pacific Symphony, and Pacific Opera Project. She's appeared in the roles of Rosalinda (*Die Fledermaus*), Contessa Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Anna Maurant (*Street Scene*), Berta (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Miriam (Lee Hoiby's *The Scarf*), and the title role of *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, among others, with companies such as Opera Western Reserve, The Crested Butte Music Festival, Nightingale Opera Theatre, Pacific Lyric Association, and Simsbury Light Opera. Behind the scenes, Diana has garnered attention for her insightful work as a stage director and librettist. Her debut librettos include Brooke deRosa's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Derrick Skye's *Gilgamesh* for the Assyrian Arts Institute (scheduled for a March 28, 2026 premiere in LA). Diana is a frequent judge and panelist for competitions, grant committees, and young artist training programs around the country. She is the Artistic Director for Lyric Opera of Orange County, which was named Emerging Arts Organization of the Year for 2022 by Arts OC. In 2022 Diana was also named a Women Leader in Orange County Arts, and an OC Visionary by the *LA Times*.



Michael O'Halloran, Singing John

Michael B. O'Halloran, baritone, has performed over 50 roles domestically and internationally. This summer, he will be seen as Robert in Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and will debut as a featured soloist singing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the California Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall. He has recently been seen as Marcello in Puccini's *La bohème*, Mizgir in the West Coast premiere of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Снегурочка*, Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Mercutio in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, Don Annibale in Donizetti's *Il Campanello*, Dancaïro in Bizet's *Carmen*, King Melchior in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Peter in *Hansel and Gretel*, and Lysander in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. He workshopped the role of Tenorio in Armienta's *Bless Me, Ultima* with Opera Southwest, and performed the role of the Policeman, as well as covered Orphée in Philip Glass' *Orphée* as an Emerging Artist at Virginia Opera. Michael made his Virginia Opera debut as a Spectrum Resident Artist, singing Il Principe Yamadori and covering Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. While at Manhattan School of Music, he was seen as Pisandre in Fauré's *Pénélope*, and Vernon in *Summer and Smoke*, having the honor of being a part of the world premiere recording, which was hailed as one of the "Top Ten New Recordings" by *Opera News*. Additional performance credits include Belcore in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, Demetrius in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Jupiter in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, The Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas*, Ben in Menotti's *The Telephone*, and the Officer in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. He also sang the role of Hanezò in Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* in Lucca, Italy, and was the first American vocalist to be a junger Künstler Bayreuth at the Bayreuther Festspiele.



Carl Pantle, Musical Director & Conductor

Carl Pantle is a dynamic and engaging musician whose artistry exudes confidence and heartfelt passion. From the first rehearsal to the final performance, he approaches his craft with a steadfast belief in the transformative power of the arts to foster positive change. Carl thrives on the connection he builds with audiences and fellow performers, channeling these relationships into vibrant and meaningful musical experiences. As a well-known collaborative pianist and vocal coach, Carl is an alumnus of the prestigious Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera. His work as a répétiteur has spanned the Bay Area and beyond, with credits at San Francisco Opera Center, Opera San Jose, West Edge Opera, and West Bay Opera, where he also served as Chorus Master. Following his studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Carl joined its staff as a vocal coach and accompanist, contributing to numerous productions, scene programs, and recitals.

Outside of opera, Carl's theater dreams have come to life, collaborating with Broadway stars as Music Director for *Broadway Against Bullying: San Francisco Edition*, featuring Keala Settle, Julia Murney, and Jay Armstrong Johnson. Recent theater credits include *Dreamgirls*, *Heathers: The Musical*, and *Kinky Boots*. Carl has performed in concert alongside Tony Award winners Patti LuPone and Laura Benanti.

For 11 seasons, Carl was a central figure with the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, serving as Principal Accompanist. His contributions as a pianist, arranger,

orchestrator, and singer are featured on several of the group's recordings. His tenure included world premieres of commissioned works and collaborations with celebrated composers such as Ann Hampton Callaway, Andrew Lippa, Stephen Schwartz, and Jake Heggie. Carl earned his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music in 2023, completed a Master's degree at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and is continuing his post-graduate studies in Keyboard Collaborative Arts at the University of Southern California.



Cynthia Stokes, Stage Director

American opera director Cynthia Stokes is dedicated to fostering community through live performances. She has directed productions for numerous opera companies, including Los Angeles Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, San Diego Opera, Opera San José, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Carolina, Glimmerglass Opera, Piedmont Opera, and Opera Philadelphia. Additionally, she has served on the directing staff for Dallas

Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, The Florentine Opera, Opera Pacific, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Ms. Stokes currently holds the Amelia T. Rieman Endowed Chair for Opera Theater at the University of Arizona. Recently, she has been awarded several grants, including support from the UA's Research and Leadership Institute for her project *Hearing the Invisible* in collaboration with the School of Medicine, an Arizona Arts Commission Grant, a Provost Initiative Grant for her Digital and Performing Arts Lab, and a Qualcomm Ideas Grant. She is also a board member of the National Opera Association and has served as a panelist for Opera America and the Arizona Arts Commission.

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**THE YELLOW
WALLPAPER
LIBRETTO**

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FARRELL

WEEK 1, Day 1

JOHN: *[Entering with JANE who clearly harbors sadness despite her initial awe of the property.]* And this shall be your room.

JANE: Ordinary people, JOHN, we are ordinary people. How did you secure such ancestral Halls?

JOHN: You need rest, fresh air, a controlled environment to prevent stimulation. If you insist you are ill we must attend to Dr. Weir's prescription.

JANE: I'd assume it haunted, else how could we afford such a colonial mansion, but surely you would laugh at me. *[She moves to unpack]*

JOHN: JENNEY will tend your things. Sit. And yes, laugh I would. I am compelled as a man of science, to dispel

romantic notions such as phantoms. The expense is of no concern.

JANE: My brother agrees.

The sea air and sunlight will calm me, and my writing will help to sort my senses.

JOHN: The worst thing to do is think about your condition.

Leave intellectual pursuits to men and still your mind.

JANE: *[with sadness]* I confess it does exhaust me, but you needn't say it.

JOHN: Then you needn't ask.

JANE: *[peering out a window]* The garden is quite lovely to behold! Grape covered arbors, a maze of hedges, the old greenhouses... I should like the bedroom with the flower box. On clear days we may even find the sea!

JOHN: It's much too small for two beds. Here I can be just down the hall.

JANE: Just imagine what stories this house must hold in its walls. The memories that haunt this place. My spine chills with excitement.

JOHN: Nonsense. 'Twas simply neglected in foreclosure. That chill is likely a draft. I'll shut the windows.

JANE: Please not them all.

JOHN: JANE, you must control this unreasonable temper.

JANE: Yes, it must be this nervous condition. Perhaps I should lie down.

JOHN: Indeed.

JANE: But JOHN, this room. Certainly the master downstairs would be- *[JENNEY enters]*

JOHN: Nonsense. You need fresh air and these windows allow the breeze from all directions. Empty your mind. You are my only patient this summer.

JANE: And I'm grateful you care for me so. *[JENNEY leaves to fetch more luggage]*

JOHN: I will monitor your regimen; you needn't bother.

Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear; and your food somewhat on your appetite.

But the air will revive you and this upstairs room will catch the clean air blown in from the valley. Truly this nervous depression is but a temporary and slight hysteria. A few weeks on rest shall have you back to yourself come Autumn. Now rest. I will see to our trunks and prepare your tonic. *[he exits]*

JANE: Airy indeed.

Were you once a nursery?

Sunshine galore on happy days!

Your children grew, but you festered, unchanged, with windows still barred. A playroom, then gymnasium, before your mischievous boys

became destructive, folded in your walls,.

Your yellow wallpaper, torn at the seams as they laid in bed, outgrowing this tiny world.

...Bed still nailed to your scuffed oak floor... How queer.

JENNEY: *[entering]* Shall I turn down your bed, Ma'am?

JANE: No need, I should like to explore a bit. The wallpaper is horrendous, don't you think?

JOHN: *[returning.]* JENNEY, join me in the kitchen. I will show you how to prepare JANE's medications and review her meal requirements.

JANE: I shall take to the garden.

JOHN: Perhaps tomorrow. You must be weary from travel.

JANE: Yes, I suppose. I feel quite alert but the day may advance on me swiftly.

JENNEY: I'll return with your shawl, Ma'am.

JANE: And my writing materials, JENNEY. I will make certain this is a good day. *[JOHN indicates to dismiss the final request.]*

JOHN: *[Aside]*

Prescriptions for a woman

Facing hysteria and

nervousness -

Undoubtedly symptoms

the fairer sex endures;

The harsh realities dealt

by fate

in a cruel and

unapologetic world.

Tinctures, and

phosphates with beef

wine for iron,

Whole milk and red meat,

rare - raw for potency!

Ammonia bromide,

atropine, morphine for

temperament.

Cod liver oils and arsenic

drops

To purify - fortify -

beleaguered brains

Spent from sadness,

disappointment, loss.

Sleep.

Rest.

Placid quietude;

still as a corpse

tempering your tired

bones

for the business of living.

Life is an exertion for the

meek:

a test of fortitude

to be matched

by the strength of muscle

or superior minds.

How lucky are women,

blessed by the industry of man's scientific intellect.

[JANE & JENNEY join

the aside as a trio]

JANE: A good day, indeed.

A few days of rest will sort my mind. Perhaps the baby will come to stay. Though not in this lurid space. If only, we could hang new paper. The color of the sea. The color of the sky. The color of my baby's eyes.

JOHN: A good day, indeed.

A few days of rest will distract her. She will see past this horrid paper. Longing to see his porcelain face. No, we will not hang new paper. The color of the sea. The color of the sky. - t'would only remind her -
The color of the baby's eyes.

JENNEY: A good day, indeed.

A few days of rest will ease their minds. Perhaps the baby will come to visit. His mother's arms, his rightful place. And she will smile at his loving eyes. The color of the sea. The color of the sky. The color of the baby's eyes.

WEEK 2, DAY 10

JENNEY: [*Offstage voice*]

JANE: Oh, I implore you, stop this awful singing.

JENNEY: [*wiping stains from Jane's clothes*] I simply cannot remove these putrid yellow stains. How queer.

JANE: This paper has seeped into everything. My hair and clothes smell of yellow. Not the yellow of buttercups, but that of all things fetid and spoilt.

JENNEY: Master JOHN says I must tell him when you are in a state...

JANE: JENNEY, life is a state. Please. I will comply. I'll keep my thoughts in silence.

JENNEY: Perhaps some warm milk...

JANE: I can not stand this forced ingestion! My belly is overfull. It is my arms that are empty.

JENNEY: [*with sympathy*] I'm told the baby does well in your cousin's care.

JANE: If he wishes me nourishment, tell him I require only pen and paper. I starve with no outlet for the myriad thoughts in this solitary existence.

JENNEY: You are so blessed to be loved by a man rich in knowledge of your mind and body. This rest cure is revolutionary, lest there'd be no reason for such still living.

JANE: No more is this living than the Columbine whose bloom is its death.

JENNEY: ...I will fetch your dinner. [*JENNEY exits*]

JANE: It's just, so very heavy... this decay. Since I cannot roam the teeming gardens, I walk the paisley monstrosity of these walls. To pass the hours, I'll roam the roads of goldenrod ribbons, intricately tied through a spoilt lemon labyrinth, leading to the haphazard end of the road: The place where the seams

meet in careless, reckless fashion; taunting the eye, as though to say, "There is no end to this deteriorating madness."

JOHN: [*writing, which is a recurring convention*]

Dear Dr. Weir,
If her symptoms are truly present, I hypothesize the return of her menses, coupled with her intellectual endeavors, are the root of her perceived nervousness. You are correct to inquire over her nutrition, as her form has become quite gaunt in the postpartum months. We maintain your regimented protocols with optimistic satisfaction. Sincerely,
JOHN

WEEK 3, DAY 18

JOHN: [*Entering with a tonic*] JANE. JENNEY tells me you've been writing again. I've said explicitly-

JANE: But JOHN, if I cannot leave this bed, I must at least expel the musings which keep me from sleep. My body is heavy and weak, but my mind races.

JOHN: No matter how talented you may be, this is not your profession; your profession, your pursuit, is motherhood.

JANE: I wish I could see the baby.

JOHN: Not until you're well.

JANE: What about something fresh? I noticed berries in the garden.

JOHN: [*frustrated*] I am at the end of my resources. If you continue to disobey your physician, we will need to transfer you to Weir Mitchell's care. He only thought you would thrive because of my credentials. Do not make me the fool.

JANE: I understand.

JOHN: Don't think me cruel. I simply aim to cure this neurasthenia and bring you home. Perhaps if you rest and regain some strength, we can send for James.

JANE: Oh what a delight to see my brother! [*she starts crying*]

JOHN: Only if you improve, my pet. These tears do not bode well.

JANE: Of course. I'll rest now. [*she drinks her tonic*]

JOHN: Yes, it would be nice to see James; to have another physician in the house. [*he exits*]

JANE: But this paper... Its plethora of bobbing heads, like a garden of gallows. They try to break through but are strangled by this pattern. If the heads were covered, or taken off, it would not be half so bad.

[*JANE humming the lullaby theme in background as the tonic takes effect*]

JOHN: Dr. Weir, JANE progresses slowly but well. Her physical prudence more judicious than her mental restraint. I've focused my patience in reading the journals you've sent. I mirror your admiration of Dr. Edward Clarke: I agree that JANE's intellectual pursuits are the catalyst

for her mental deterioration these past months. You are correct in assuming her parents did not limit her academic pursuits in her formative years.

It only corroborates the fact that her reproductive health has suffered in its ability to recover.

I remain, in steadfast faith, the emissary of your practice.

With admiration and thanks,

JOHN _____

JENNEY: *Singing vocalise of the folk tune/lullaby offstage*

JANE: *[Fully under the effects of her medication]*

A good, compliant woman.

I am really fond of this room, despite the wallpaper.

If I keep my eye steady I can follow the pattern:

Sprawling outlines running off in slanted waves of optic horror beyond bloated curves and flourishes. The wallpaper has provided an escape as the hours slowly pass.

Broth and Milk Fat...

Pelvic stimulation...

Wine and sedatives...

I've not the energy for revolt, or hope, or God.

Only the energy to lose hours inside this sunbleached, disheveled, jaundiced jungle.

[Noticing a woman's figure in the wallpaper]

A good, compliant woman

In the care of scientific men,

Observed, studied,

The prescription of my spiritual destiny

confidently endorsed; so I'm told by Phds and

students of the medical Arts.

My creed is trust, obedience.

A higher power imbues my physician's intellect to translate the commotion of my frail and frayed circuitry.

WEEK 4, DAY 27

JOHN: *[writing]* Dear Dr. Weir,

I regret to report on JANE's deterioration. Her physical symptoms outpace my perception of her mental state. I've recently succumbed, from curiosity, to reading the journals printed of late. I wonder at your view of Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi:

I find it absurd that Harvard Medical School could publish such contrarian views without regard. I find it compelling Jacobi compiled such scientific data in her thesis despite the limitations of her sex. The statistical evidence she shares refutes Clarke's anecdotal hypothesis, despite well deserved authority. I apologize, not intent on challenging, but fraught for JANE's improvement. With admiration and thanks,
JOHN

JENNEY: Am I real?

Am I in the room?

I see, I listen, but feel not ...corporeal. I am no more than a sponge, soaking up the overflow of immiscible matter.

Master JOHN confidently maintains, despite Ms.

JANE's deterioration...

He observes, but does not see;

hears but does not listen.

I am oversaturated with contradiction:

Rebirth through decay;

Exertion through atrophy;

Pride through apathy.

His purpose through her submission.

JANE: [To the woman in the wall]

You mustn't cry.
He thinks we're asleep.
Quell your whimpering throat.
He'll hear us.
Soft.
I know.
I'm here. I'm here, too.
I see you, the buds of your eyes like a poppy after blooming, pregnant with seed.
Or perhaps like the poor woman swinging in the gallows.
Is that how you came to be?
Your purgatory to swing eternally behind this mustard paisley, these goldenrod ribbons.
Soft.
Patience.
I'm here, too. Swinging.
Just beyond this phantom fence, living, but prisoner, nonetheless.
It's hard to decide if I rest in fortune's favor.
Are you damned?
Or are you safe? Tucked into the ornate recesses of this rotten suppurating labyrinth?
You mustn't cry.
We must have our sleep.
He'll quiet you;
arrest the timid beat of your tired heart. We will rest while he executes his satisfaction.

WEEK 5, DAY 32

JOHN: Dr. Weir,
I must extend my profound apologies.
Never would I undermine your scientific authority.
Perhaps I was met with a momentary weakness,
A biased response upon my initial observations.
I will maintain my position as facilitator of your work;
Divorce myself from obvious familial ties.
JOHN

—
JENNEY tucking JANE into bed, while JOHN stands by vacillating between concern and frustration.

JENNEY: Ma'am, what can I bring you? You must be frozen through.
The wool throw in the cupboard...

JOHN: You gave me quite a scare, JANE.
Truly? What possessed you to be outside, in your condition.

JANE: The air... the open sky.
I crave the absence of these walls, desperately.

JOHN: To find you sleeping in the grass...

You mustn't be so reckless!

JANE: I'm sorry, JOHN.

JOHN: As am I. I'm afraid you're in no state to entertain guests.

JENNEY: But shouldn't she see the baby!

JOHN: JENNEY.

JENNEY: Surely, this was an isolated impulse.

JOHN: Quiet.

JANE: I'm sure you are correct, JOHN.

JOHN: Naturally.

JANE: This stimulation has weighed on me.

JOHN: JENNEY, prepare JANE's beef wine and milk. [*JENNEY leaves.*]

JANE: JOHN, you must tell her to stop singing in the night.
Her voice simply permeates the house and we can't rest with that noise.

JOHN: I've heard nothing, but will be certain to quiet the girl.

I'm proud of you JANE.
You've handled this
consequence with grace.
Perhaps your reason is
not as compromised as
you'd have me presume.
[JOHN exits]

JANE: [Pulling a rope
from inside her dress,
she hides it under the
bed.]
And the paper is shifting.
She is moving the
pattern,
tangling it further
seeking escape!

JENNEY: [returning]
Ms. JANE, can I get you
anything?

JANE: [Watching the
paper].
My mind will not rest.

JENNEY: I'll prepare
your tonic unless you
would like something
else...

JANE: [Lying down] I will
rest while he finds
satisfaction.

JENNEY: Oh, Ma'am,
perhaps you should
sleep. I will tell Master
JOHN -

JANE: The thrusting...
suffocating...

JENNEY: I could sleep
with you.

JANE: Unnecessary.
[JENNEY exits]
I am never alone. She is
always there pulling and
shaking, and I strip away
her prison slowly.
Shhh... they are
beginning to notice.
That wretched song - and
creeping stench.
Putrid. I should burn the
house down to block the
stench.

WEEK 6, DAY 41

JOHN reading his
correspondence, apart
from JENNEY & JANE

JOHN:[Reading]
Dear JOHN,
"Succinctly, rest, a
fattening diet, massage,
and electricity will
stimulate their blood
production, depleted in
menses and
childbearing."

JANE: [picking at the
wallpaper, seeing beyond
her room]
I know your secret.
It is well to creep about in
the night. But brazenly
creeping
in shadowy grape arbors,
hiding in the blackberry
vines...

Humiliating! This
creeping.

JOHN: [Reading] "When
her rest is completed, tell
her... Live as domestic a
life as possible. Have
your child with you all the
time. . . . Have but two
hours' intellectual life a
day... never touch pen,
brush, or pencil as long
as you live..."

JANE: But I see you,
from every window. Most
women do not creep by
daylight. I always lock the
door when I creep.

JENNEY: Ms. JANE! Let
me in!
This door is stuck.
Please, let me in.

JANE: The children
destroyed the bed - it is
quite gnawed.
I tried to move it, but hurt
my teeth.

JOHN: [Reading] "The
whole daily drama of the
sick-room, with its
selfishnesses and its
craving for sympathy and
indulgence..."

JENNEY: I'll send for
your cousin! Slip your
pen and paper to you.

JANE: You've been rubbing the walls with your creeping!
[Madly intoning the lullaby theme]

JOHN:*[Reading]* "When bidden to stay in bed a month, neither to read, write, nor sew – then rest becomes a rather bitter medicine, and they are glad enough to accept the order to rise and go about."

JENNEY: Perhaps I can bring the baby.

JANE: Smudged down low are those strangled heads...
[Madly intoning the lullaby theme]

JOHN: *[Reading]*
"Sincerely,"

JENNEY: Ma'am!
Please!

JANE: Bulbous eyes...
[Madly intoning the lullaby theme]

JOHN: *[Reading]*
"Doctor..."

JENNEY: JANE! Please!

JANE: Waddling fungus shrieking with derision!

[Madly intoning the lullaby theme]

JOHN:*[Reading]* "Silas Weir Mitchell"

JENNEY: Doctor! Come quickly!

JANE: *[Shouting beyond the door]*
Do you see all the women?
Creeping in the garden?
I wonder if they came out of the wallpaper, as I did.

JENNEY: JANE! Please!

JOHN: *[Arriving]* JANE, open the door!

JANE: *[Taking out the rope and tying the rope round her neck]*
I've got out at last! And securely fastened, you won't contain me again!

JOHN: *[feigning calm]*
Open the door, my darling.

JANE: *[Shouting beyond the door, taking out the rope]*
I won't go back in there, Besides I've torn the wallpaper so you cannot trap me any more!

JOHN: JENNEY, get the axe! *[JENNEY exits]*

JANE: *[JOHN breaks in and all is quiet as he stares, bewildered, and faints. The lullaby turns soft and beautiful.]*

JANE: *[Swaying with a vacant smile, as though from a noose.]* Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, right in my path by the wall, and now I can creep over him every time.

End.

