

“Society’s Subliminal and Deliberate Coercion of Women’s Dependence on Men”

Throughout history, women have been “expected” to depend on and allow their existence to be dictated by men. Society is taught to think of women as weak, subservient, and inferior to men. Artificial ceilings restrict the aspirations, goals, and achievements of women. Society normalizes this thought process and persuades many into believing that certain inequities are inevitable and expected. Besides, women most certainly cannot manage high-stress environments, jobs demanding physical strength and endurance, or any activity requiring quick, resourceful thinking. The world attempts to impose this mentality on us all. Many of the books, short stories, and films we discussed show numerous examples of how women have & continue to experience these oppressive actions and ways. This paper will closely examine the oppression of women with examples of them being undermined, not having the same opportunities, and not receiving the compassion or respect they deserve. This will be done by closely dissecting and providing supporting evidence of each piece of referenced media. Independent women and single mothers are becoming more common as time goes on because the coercion of women’s dependence on men creates unhealthy, reliant bonds.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” and “The Cure” show how women’s roles are expected and encouraged to depend on men. It varies from being forced to get married to having male doctors try to analyze postpartum depression. Indeed, the narrators’ mental states worsen because they are the subjects of neglect. The woman narrator of “The Yellow Wallpaper” begins not wanting to be bothered by her husband anymore. She stated, “If a physician of high standing, and one’s own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency - what is one to do?” She is

experiencing postpartum depression with a growing mental illness due to her confinement to one room and separation from her baby. To no surprise, her brother, who is also a physician, and her husband both agreed with the doctor and thought her illness was self-inflicted due to bad nerves. Male doctors did not fully understand female anatomy and its mental impact on women. More importantly, they showed little regard or empathy for women suffering from these conditions. Similarly, the female narrator of "The Cure" begins questioning her sanity when forcibly locked away in a mental institution simply because of an emotional episode and her refusal to marry a strange man. Her emotional attack resulted from finding out about the arranged marriage, which caused her to pass out. The text states, "When the doctor slapped me, I fell silent in shock, and he told me that my emotions had gotten the best of me, that my delicate female constitution couldn't handle so much education, that I had best withdraw for the rest of the semester and focus on more womanly arts: some light embroidery, perhaps, in preparation for my upcoming wedding." The doctor believed salt air would cure her shock, so she was sent to a sanatorium. Although she had no previous associations or acquaintances with the man, society would not accept her bold defiance and boastful projection that she would instead be locked and tortured in a mental institution than be forced to marry a stranger. Again, only in a male-dominated society is such an injustice allowed to happen. Her way of coping with this injustice was by believing that a female vampire would transform her into a vampire and lead to her imaginary escape from bondage to a man and the confinement of the mental institution. These stories illustrate how women suffer punitive consequences when they do not consent to the actions of a man or conform to expected behaviors of society. People turn against them, put them away, or push them to the side.

More fine examples of men's biases, lack of understanding, and compassion are prevalent. For example, most people will say women exaggerate when experiencing menstrual symptoms, especially cramps. The Medical Doctors' ways of "helping" prescribe birth control with several side effects instead of researching solutions with fewer issues. According to most individuals, when women are menstruating, they cannot call out of work because it is not considered an excusable absence without a doctors' note. It is often not an excusable absence because many people, especially men, believe menstruating is normal, not that bad, and is like a minor headache, easy to overcome.

Grieving over a loved one, especially a spouse, while raising kids is quite a challenge. In the movie "The Babadook," the Babadook is a monster, and metaphorically, the mother's grief. She refused to grieve over her husband fully, which impacted her and her son's life. It stood out to me how the mother's male co-worker, Robbie, told the mom it is okay not to be okay. The co-worker's action is significant because society has this idea where single moms must always be strong. Her co-worker doesn't dismiss how she feels when she admits she feels stressed. The co-worker even offers to cover for her so she can go home. Throughout "The Babadook," individuals try to convince the main character, Amelia, to move on and get back into the dating world. This movie shows how others expect single mothers to have well-behaved children and no stress. It is also demonstrated that most of the people associated with the mother thought she should be done grieving her husband. That is wrong because no one should tell others how long they should grieve. For centuries, women raising children independently or being independent overall has been frowned upon and discouraged. This movie does not discourage the single parent; however, no one understands how hard it is to be a single mom while maintaining good

health. The Babadook does hint at Amelia needing a male figure in her life to help her emotionally and financially, which could relieve the stress of being a single parent as well.

As a result of the coerced mindset of individuals, most media exhibit women being saved by men and committed to one man. In *Mexican Gothic*, the protagonist, Noemí, could be described as a spoiled and entitled individual in the beginning. She struggled with committing to her studies and long-term relationships. Due to her lack of commitment to one man and choice of clothing, many individuals would describe her as a “slut” in today’s time, especially during the 1950’s setting of this story. Slut shaming is also an issue women deal with today for the same reasons. In the story, Noemi’s cousin, Catalina, struggled with the loss of her parents. To fill the void of her parents, she married Virgil after knowing him for a short time. He moved her away from her family when she married him and mentally and physically abused her. Noemi’s father sent Noemi to check on the damsel in distress, Catalina. In *Mexican Gothic*, we see in multiple ways how men view women as objects, which is a real-world issue. We always see how men perceive women to be weak and easy targets. An example of men seeing women as easy targets is Virgil marrying Catalina. He saw how eager and desperate she was for love and attention. We have discussed how men are usually the heroes in most stories, movies, etc. However, in this book, a woman is the hero. Noemi not only rescued Catalina, but she also rescued Francis. In other words, a man, Francis, was dependent on Noemi.

Many shocking things occur within the first season of *The Witcher*. In this show, women break the norms and carry more power and freedom. One surprising thing is how Queen Calanthe often reminded King Eist that he was married to her, not the other way around. Another interesting note is how the Queen has more power over her King, and she made it clear that it was her kingdom and not his. The relationship between the Queen and King was not the ideal or

standard relationship that is displayed in books, movies, and shows. The Queen wanted everyone to know the King depended on her and not the other way around. When the Queen's granddaughter, Ciri, screamed, it was so powerful--like a roar! Her scream symbolizes how powerful women's voices can be. A few times in the show, many could consider Yennefer a "bitch". For example, when Yennefer became beautiful, she used her power to fulfill her sexual fantasies and aggressively attract men, especially Geralt. Some would even describe Yennefer as a broad because she used her ability to get men to sleep with her. While watching this series, many questions could be formed. For example, how and why is the lady at the tavern able to convince the male owner to serve Geralt? This is to exemplify the difference in power between women and men. Why did Yennefer have to sacrifice her uterus of all things? The writer forces Yennefer to choose between keeping her uterus and continuing to be "ugly" or sacrificing it and having the power of beauty to reflect how life often appears to be for women. For some reason, women can be beautiful or intelligent; they cannot be both. Women often had and continue to choose between other things, such as a single working woman or a stay-at-home wife and mom. Different norms displayed, such as women seducing men with their charm, were also displayed in the show. The show also demonstrates a norm such as women, especially young women, can be easily deceived.

The media displays the growth over time of how women's independence has changed. Women have begun to overcome oppression by any means necessary. Course discussions have involved how males manipulate and physically/emotionally abuse women. Men also underestimate and continue to target women. We also have discussed mothers being single parents can be challenging, especially when trying to grieve simultaneously. Little do men know the power of women, mainly when united.

Works Cited

Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. *Mexican Gothic*. Jo Fletcher Books, 2020.

Perkins-Stetson, Charlotte. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. 1892.

Sapkowski, Andrzej. *The Witcher*, Season One, 2019.

Lo, Malinda. *The Cure*. 2015.