Understanding a Women’s Mind

‘The Need To be Heard’

A woman’s want for independence is often mistaken for feminism, but this isn’t the case for Charlotte Gilman and Bobby Ann Mason. These women have been in a long fight to gain recognition in a male run society. Real life challenges that these two women has faced has found their way into many of their novels and stories, including Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” and Mason’s “Shiloh”. They both tell a tale that ends in tragedy that may have been able to have been prevented. Both stories also revolve around the same concept, which is why aren’t their husband hearing them. The women seem to be lost in a typical man dominated marriage, where the women come in at number two every time, never once being an equal. In the “The Yellow Wallpaper” Gilman uses her real name, which some psychologist believe she used as an outlet to express her severe depression (St. Jean). To understand the mind of women a man must be willing to communicate, sympathize, and hear what they are saying, or understand where they are coming from.

The short story “Shiloh” opens with Norma Jean being introduced as Leroy Moffitt’s wife, as she lifts weights, which clearly shows that this is not the average 1980’s home. In most households during this time the wife would be watching the husband lift weights, but because...
this isn’t the case in “Shiloh.” Norma Jean seems to have more dominance in their relationship, but the reader quickly learns that she is just as vulnerable as any other woman in a marriage (Butcher). With Leroy being home more than ever because of his injured leg, Norma Jean has to hide the fact that she would rather be home by herself doing the things she wants to do, enjoying the space she was granted for more than fifteen years. As the reader continues to read “Shiloh,” they learn their marriage is based on what they remember each other to be right after high school, before Leroy started driving his rig. These old truths have blossomed into lies and miscommunication, which neither of them wants to see the reality of. XXXX, you bring nothing in from the story to support much of this. A passage of description or a few lines of dialogue would add much here to help support your idea.

Blythe and Sweet suggest that their unspoken problems originate from Leroy’s childlike state of thinking. They also believe that it is only when he is confronted with adult situations that his mind starts to show signs that he is more mature than he seems. Leroy believes that he and Norma Jean’s relationship is in the same state it was in when they got married. He doesn’t realize Norma Jean is in a different place or more realistic to current situations. Leroy, like Norma Jean, doesn’t know what to do with all this time that they now spend together. He thinks that if he builds her a log cabin that they can move, start over and build a new life. It’s as if he thinks this will solve all his problems in one solution. They also suggest that Leroy’s inner child also comes out when Mabel, Norma Jean’s mother, comes for a visit, he feels he has to justify his actions when she asks him about sewing, he then quickly changes the subject to building them a log cabin. As Mabel and Norma Jean introduce reality into his dream of building a log cabin he gets defensive and says he’ll do whatever it takes (573). Lots of plot summary here, XXXX. What does this paragraph do to further develop what you have laid out for a thesis?
In addition to his cabin obsession Leroy’s need for performance enhancement drugs also shows his inner youth. The average adult would have probably went to the doctor and made up some ridiculous story, but not Leroy, he does his business with a kid that reminds him of his own deceased son in the parking lot and acts out a whole charade about helping fix a stalled car just to get his hands on some marijuana. This shows the elaborate thought process it took to come up with this plan is one of a child. Bucher suggests that these simple actions take a huge toll on Norma Jean. She argues that Norma Jean is looking for stability and finds it by taking control of her life. While reading the short story most of the things Leroy says is log cabin related, which will lead the reader to believe that Leroy is trying to make the relationship work and trying to provide the stability Norma Jean is desperately seeking for their home. The story also mentions that Leroy feels like he is just starting to settle down with the woman he loves (571). This suggests that after all these years apart he feels as if nothing has changed.

Bucher also argues that Mabel felt the tension between Leroy and Norma Jean and suggested that take a trip to Shiloh. Mabel felt that they had lost what once held them together, she thought if that went away together they could find themselves again. This shows that even at times where it appears that she didn’t like Leroy that she wanted their marriage to work. In a strange twist, the very place where Mabel was truly happy and urged them to go is the very place their marriage ended.

Gilman’s story “The Yellow Wallpaper” opens with Charlotte and her husband John moving into an estate that Charlotte describes as a haunted mansion. Immediately as the story opens the reader is told that Charlotte is not well, but what they don’t find out until later is that her pain is more mental rather than physical. The main problem in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is that John contradicts the way she says she feels, and the fact that he tells her he must be her
doctor first and husband second take a huge toll on their marriage. As an outlet Charlotte turns her focus to writing, which she can only do when John is away in fear that he may find out. When Charlotte walks into what will be their bedroom for the next three months she is appalled at what she sees on the wall, this will become the focal point of the story.

As Charlotte put most of her attention into staring at the wallpaper it becomes an allegory for her life (St. Jean). She began to see a women trapped inside the wallpaper trying to get out. Charlotte also mentions that the wallpaper has lines with no end. These descriptions become obvious as the story deepens in meaning. Charlotte becomes a puppet for everyone around her, whatever they say she must do. It appears that they are trying to help her, but what they don’t know or don’t want to realize that it is affecting her more. She starts to feel trapped in her own home, with no way out. It is only when Jennie actually starts to listen and watch Charlotte more closely that she starts to see that Charlotte is not as crazy as John makes her out to be. She learns that Charlotte needs something that she can’t give her, which is the love and attention that only her husband can give her.

Charlotte feels alone and that no one understands her, she doesn’t like what her life has become. Agoeslaw argues that “The Yellow Wallpaper” was written to show women can be more than just a ‘housewife’. She compares Charlotte to being a muzzled dog. Everything Charlotte does and suggests is shot down. Her mother in-law believes that she should be enjoying life as a doctor’s wife, but that isn’t what she wants. The only thing she finds solace in is her writing, which she can only do behind closed doors until her doctor comes in and tell her she shouldn’t be writing and rips up her journal. When he did that he took her voice away, he reprimanded her as if she was a child. That put Charlotte in an even worse state than before she now has nothing to look forward to, to provide any type of excitement in her life. John also refers
to Charlotte as a little girl multiple times throughout the story, which shows the reader that he clearly doesn’t see her as an equal.

These two authors both seem to be relaying a message within their writing. They both have women leads that are facing mental and emotional problems. They feel trapped behind their men with no way out. These women find ways to express themselves and be productive with their time, which cause men to feel inferior. The main difference between these two stories is the fact that in “Shiloh” Norma Jean wants Leroy to leave and get back on the road, whereas Charlotte wants John home more, she wants to see him more often and take part in daily activities. Gilman and Mason write about these women in such a way that to the reader it appears to show a lot of tension in their marriages, but the men are oblivious to that fact. Leroy and John only see what they want to see, they don’t understand why their wives are becoming distant.

According to Gilman and Mason both characters Charlotte and Norma Jean were modeled after their own lives. Ms. Gilman never liked the fact she was never taken seriously by her male colleagues. Until her death she was fighting for equal rights for women. She believed that a woman could do everything a man can do. After one divorce from a husband much like John, she married again and this time to a man that was there for her and as more of a partner that a leader (Merriman). Ms. Mason still remains an active feminist that continues to write books about independent women that take the leadership role and makes it on their own without a man.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” and “Shiloh” end with Charlotte hanging herself and Norma Jean jumping off of a bluff. These women felt as if there was no other way out, they weren’t being heard, or understood. The husbands had put their feelings and knowledge ahead of what
should have been the most important things in their lives, their wives. Both women had openly expressed their concerns and feelings to the men to many times, with the main one being that they both felt they were being treated as a child. Women who had everything going for them from their families and husbands stand point felt 

that they had to die in order to be free and live the way they wanted. As time tells, women are sensitive beings, they have to be handled with care, with communication being the key. The cause of Feminism shouldn’t have to be a way of life, it should be nonexistent in this society.

XXX, Lots of focusing and grammatically charged errors within this paper. I cannot help thinking that it is a rushed effort on your part. I say this because there is little evidence of careful planning, organization, and/or proofreading for errors that have been discussed endlessly in class. In addition, the spacing was extended and not according to MLA formatting guidelines. Even with the extended spaces between paragraphs, the analysis came up short of the 7-10 page requirement. Considering what we attempted to accomplish in ENC 1101, I would have expected much better from you. Sorry to be so frank with you.

C/O=12 D=13 S/S=13 G/M=13 R/D=13

TOTAL=64D


