

# Women in Cure: The Governmentality of 19<sup>th</sup> century Medical Discourse on Women Bodies

Hsin-Ju Kuo<sup>1</sup>

National Cheng Kung University

## Abstract

Medicine and literature link to each other because they share the same philosophy: to tell stories about human beings. Both doctors and writers share the same affinity for narrating what they see about life. In this paper, I intend to explore the border dialogue of two disciplines, medical discourse and literary studies in nineteenth-century in America, and examine how these two disciplines deal with the issue of constructing gendered bodies. Since the publication of Gilman's autobiography *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* and her novella *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Weir Silas Mitchell's "rest cure" has been notorious for its gender-biased view in "reeducating" female neurasthenia patients who are considered deviant from docile Victorian women. In this paper, my aim is to re-examine the broader historical and medical context of Dr. Mitchell's age and to trace, in terms of Foucault's notions, the attributes of "author function" and "founders of discursivity" within Dr. Mitchell's rest cure. I will then explain that for Gilman, writing, more than a force of resistance, serves as her "technology of self" and "art of survival" in a male/medical dominant society.

Keywords: rest cure, medical discourse, author function, gender, technology of self

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<sup>1</sup> Hsin-Ju Kuo, Doctoral Student at National Cheng Kung University