The Story of an Hour and A Rose for Emily Comparative Analysis

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Character Comparison Analysis

The two short stories are fascinating because of the unique ideas and concepts they present about the status of women in contemporary society. The two stories have presented the female character as the major protagonist although the major characters have been presented in different ways in both stories. The two stories represent the different ways in which women have been restrained in society. Women have been treated as options and are subjected to many problems that hinder them from chasing their dreams and reaching their potential in society. For such reasons, women became repressed members of a society that worked to dictate everything about them. As such, the two short stories have similar and contrasting ways in which the female characters have been represented in both the stories using a feminist perspective.

In the short story "A Rose for Emily," the female protagonist, Emily, has a craving for attachment with her father. As the story begins, Emily is represented as a woman who is very dependent on her father. She was provided with all that she needed because she came from an affluent family. Her father, Mr. Grieson, gave loan money to the town, which she received back with interest. However, after the death of her father, Emily became very poor because she lost everything they had. She was only left with her house. She did not know what to do after she lost her father since all her life, she relied on him heavily. Emily had no other family in town. She failed to work to maintain a normal lifestyle like other people in the town.

The fact that Emily depended on other people and became helpless without their support can be attributed to the way she was raised by her father. This is evident in the story, "the Griesons held themselves a little too high for what they really are" (Faulkner, 1931, p. 2). The townspeople empathized with her because she became lonely. Emily did not get married at age thirty, as expected by society. However, it is evident that she longed to be a mother and a wife just like any other woman of her time. When she met Homer Baron, she took advantage of the opportunity to get to know him well. However, she was disappointed as Baron was just a casual laborer from the north. Emily hoped to have a normal family similar to what her father gave her. In the story, Emily represents the kind of woman who hopes to establish a happy family with a man she could depend on, just like her father raised her.

On the contrary, The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin is a depiction of a period when men were urged to join war groups and leave their women to take care of their families. Mrs. Mallard, the main character of the story, is one of the women who is forced to stay at home to wait for her husband, Mr. Brently Mallard. Although Mrs. Mallard had no children, she had a heart ailment. In the story, women were given limited opportunities in society because of their gender. Mrs. Mallard, in the story, is represented as just a wife to Mr. Mallard. She did not have an occupation. From a feminist point of view, society has hindered Mrs. Mallard from acting in the ways she wanted. Her character has been repressed by the social norms of society. The writer says that Mrs. Mallard entered a room crowded with people when she heard about her husband's death.

Upon entering the room, she acted just the way society expected her to, weeping and crying over her dead husband. However, when she was alone in her room, she changed her sensation. She became optimistic in the way she viewed things in her room. This is apparent from the part of the story that says, "she could see in the open square before her house the tops of the trees that were all aquiver with the new spring of life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air….in the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her family…there were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds (Chopin, 1894, p. 1)." The people who were congested in the room were a symbol of the repressive society that Mrs. Mallard lived in. Her room was a symbol of her personal being, her escape from society to be her natural self. Louise, her individual self without her husband, is an adventurous woman who longs to discover and experience the world. However, she gave up her dreams and freedom to get married as societal norms dictated. Therefore, upon hearing about her husband's death, she thought that she had an opportunity to become independent because she considered her husband to be the one holding her back from exploring her dreams.

The two stories were written to depict a society with limitations and norms that were enforced upon women, which were considered to set parameters for judging right and wrong. These norms restricted the females in society and denied them the opportunity to experience freedom as they were limited to housekeeping and bearing children. The two characters in society experience societal restrictions which limit them from experiencing freedom. Emily felt the pressure to live a normal life, which she also desired. She wanted her life to be in line with the societal norms because she felt awkward about her situation. She wanted an affirmation that she was like everyone else in society, unlike what her father had made her believe. Mrs. Mallard, on the contrary, did not desire to conform to societal norms; she wanted to leave everything and experience freedom. Both characters died in the end. Their deaths symbolized freedom. Mrs. Mallard died of a heart attack when her husband's body was brought home. In her death, she became free from the responsibilities that were holding her back. Emily's death symbolized an end to her desire to be accepted in society.

References

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Faulkner, W., Schwarz, J., & Urbánek, Z. (1958). A rose for Emily (pp. 170-179). Paderborn, De: Verlag F. Schöningh.