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Analyzing Character Connection

Stories written by different authors can often have character connections. Although

“The Yellow Wallpaper” written by Charlotte Perkins and John Steinbeck's

“The Chrysanthemums” are written by female and male authors respectively; their main characters have many similarities. There is a very strong character connection in the two stories. Both have a female protagonist living in societies that do not believe that women can exist outside of marriage. The protagonists of these stories also struggle through suffocating marriages and difficult relationships with their husbands. Both women are intelligent, but they live under-stimulated and unsatisfying lives. The main characters in the stories portray how women are stereotyped by men and society only because of their gender despite being capable of much more.

Elisa Allen’s character in “The Chrysanthemums” is an oppressed married woman, and she seems forgotten by her husband and the world. Due to her husband's lack of attention or care she turns to her garden for comfort and happiness. The flowers she tends to in the garden act as her companions. Chrysanthemums are flowers that need specific tending, patience, and care, and they must be treated with delicate hands daily. Elisa focuses a lot of her time on her flowers and she takes comfort and pride in her ability to grow the flowers. Similarly, in “The Yellow Wallpaper”, the oppressed narrator has had a child and suffered from depression which makes her husband prescribe her a treatment that is standard for mental illnesses. The compulsory treatment involves complete rest and isolation in the house, which she highly opposes. During her time in isolation she turns to the only thing present in her life for her companion, the dull yellow wallpaper. The narrator is repulsed and annoyed by her only companion, which is a peeled and creepy yellow wallpaper saying that the worst part was its dull pattern. The different types of oppression the characters receive from their husbands play an important role within the stories.

The female characters seem to be against the distinction between men's 'active' work and the 'domestic' functions of women. They reject the gender division that places women in an inferior position. The narrator and Elisa's husbands have reduced them to petulant children who cannot stand up for themselves without seeming disloyal and unreasonable. Despite the women's intellectual capabilities, the mental and physical constraints on them seem to limit them. The narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper” has been placed on a compulsory resting cure, forcing her to become completely passive. Elisa in “Chrysanthemums” seems to be more intelligent than her husband, but she doesn't even get the chance to manage the ranch. By the end of the stories, both women seem to have survived. Elisa survives when she grows the flowers that even her husband thinks are lovely, and she later gets over him. “The Yellow Wallpaper” narrator also seems to have survived since after several days of trying to pull off the wallpaper, she sees a sub-pattern, and later, when her husband comes and finds that she has pulled off most of the paper, he faints. She creeps over him, indicating that finally she had survived and regained her power.

In conclusion, both stories have a female protagonist living in a society that does not believe that women can exist outside of marriage. Elisa is an oppressed woman, and she seems forgotten by her husband. She turns to her garden for comfort. Similarly, in “The Yellow Wallpaper”, the oppressed narrator turns to the only thing present in her life for her companion, the dull yellow wallpaper. The female characters seem to be against the distinction between men's 'active' work and the 'domestic' functions of women. By the end of the stories, both women seem to have survived.

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