?The Judge?S Wife? By Isabel Allende Essay, Research Paper

In ?The Judge?s Wife? the author, Isabel Allende, uses a variety of techniques to

make full use of the limited space within her short story. By using strong imagery,

providing a background, providing believable human actions, and examining justice, M.

Allende creates a piece readers can understand to the point of empathy. Because her

short story examines human behavior in respect to passions, justice, and emotion (love)

in a plausible manner one can find close similarities between her work and that of Mary

Shelly?s Frankenstein.

The author makes use of imagery to embellish not only upon her environment, but

also her characters. M. Allende presents the ideas of corruption, innocence, and

strictness simply through well-selected adjectives that lend eloquently to the

descriptions of her characters. The strait laced judge being ??dressed formally in black

? and his boots always shone with bees wax ? (Allende, 422). One can infer by details

such as those that that particular individual appreciates formality, and considering his

desert location, a strict adherence to it. The author also uses images of deformity

demonstrate the corruption of her main character, Nicholas Vidal; by providing him with

four (4) nipples and a scared face the reader can have a visual representation of the

character?s tragic formation. In much the same manner, one can see such development

within Frankenstein?s creation. The monster?s grotesque outward appearance reflects

his corrupted creation. Using such imagery the author allows the readers to form a solid

conception of the plight of their characters.

Mary Shelly uses lovely poetic imagery in much the same way to define, and give

three-dimensional presence to her characters. Such use of imagery for the purpose of

character definition can most clearly be seen in her description of her monster:

?His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as

beautiful. Beautiful, Great GOD! His yellow skin scarcely covered the

work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black

and flowering; his teeth pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only

formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost

of the same colour as the dunwhite sockets in which they were set, his

shriveled complexion and strait black lips.? (Shelly, 56)

In viewing the above passage, much of the same type of character definition can be

seen; very similar to the manner in which Allende casts her deformed mold of her

creature, Nicholas.

Beyond merely presenting imagery to enhance the characters, the Allende also

supplies background information in order to enhance the readers understanding of how

the main character arrived at his current state. The author focuses on the main

character?s fatherless and loveless conception in order to accentuate how his

development occurred. In a similar fashion Allende?s character Nicholas Vidal was

conceived in a similar fashion as Frankenstein?s monster. Both are created and

ultimately rejected by their creators who attempt to destroy them. These horrid

monsters are invariably unwanted by their creators, thus their creators go to great

lengths to attempt to snuff out the lives of the creations in order that they not wreak

havoc upon the world. Both authors using this particular method of rejection to temper

the souls of their monsters to the hardness of iron (Allende, 423). In each case this

extreme form of temperament creates an almost supernatural being, filled with great

destructive forces.

Further extending upon the parallel roles of Nicholas and the Monster, a clear

outcasting from society also aids in their murderous temperament. Each character finds

himself rejected by society. The monster, from Frankenstein, is rejected by the family

he assists solely due to his grotesque appearance. In much the same way Nicholas is

assumed early on in his life by ?decent folk? to become a criminal due to the telling

marks on his face. It may well be said that though the Judge, in his strait laced figure,

may not have directly created Nicholas, yet in reality he probably did in deed, like the

rest of society, stereotyped and eventually outcast Nicholas based solely upon the scars

on his face. In each case the author makes use of societies tendency to categorize and

reject an individual based solely on their exterior shells, rather than probing the unique

individual.

To solely focus upon the main character within this story would be folly when making

a true comparison to Frankenstein. Indeed the role of the judge has many overlapping

qualities with Victor Frankenstein. Each man peruses, as both texts put it, their own

?creature?, to the points of virtual insanity. In doing so, these men put the welfare of

their families in danger, and eventually cause their own inevitable demises. In both

cases the authors make use of the character?s deep passion for justice: literally in the

form of law and figuratively in the form of revenge. Allende takes the judge?s passion a

step further into the realm of juxtapose, by having that character create a great injustice

in order to attempt to find the justice he seeks. This ironic dual standard for justice

presides within Victor Frankenstein as well, and can be seen in the initial and final

sequences in the text. His lust for revenge brings him to the poles of the world in

search of his horrid creation. Shelly and Allende rely upon the readers understanding of

passion to enhance the realistic level of their characters.

It is interesting to make note however that both authors severely censure those who

go against the grains of natural morality. At this point the characters of the two stories

again overlap, being that they both eventually die for the injustices they inflict. The

judge ultimately gets killed fleeing from the repercussions of his injustices, while, in

slight contrast, Frankenstein dies in the pursuit of avenging his injustice. It should be

noted that the antagonists to these characters are not the ones to cause them physical

harm, despite their intentions. Rather what kills these characters stems from their

internal mechanisms.

Another point worth examining in these stories stems from the authors? use of

women, given the consideration that both authors are women. Women in both stories

are characterized in victimized roles, in which they are powerless creatures. Yet one

must wonder where the motivation, given the gender of the author, for such an

exclusion takes place. In societies such as that of 1817 England and 1944 Peru ideas

of civil liberties and sexual equality were not as prevalent as in today?s society. As

such, it can be inferred that in order to be a published writer in those environments, one

would have to appeal to the dominant male market. Yet a contrast between 1817 and

1944 does arise that separates the roles of women within these two periods. In

Allende?s 1944 piece she allows the feminine character, although weak and victimized,

knowledge and use of her sexual power. In fact the author uses this sexual power to

finally bring the main character Nicholas to justice.

In looking at women?s roles within both of the stories it becomes relevant to note that

each author makes the clear the need for emotional and physical contact from the

opposite sex. The authors portraying the idea that ?Perhaps a woman?s love would

have made? these tortured characters ?? less wretched? (Allende, 423). Indeed in The

Judge?s Wife much of the main character?s corruption is said to be to this. Similarly

within the texts of Frankenstein one can a similar pattern in the request of the creature

for feminine companionship. Allende and Shelly both make indications in their texts that

this type of love contains both a necessary and satisfying function.

Isabel Allende uses a combination of literary tools and techniques to assemble a

piece that in some ways reflects a great masterpiece. By refining strong imagery

Allende gives the reader the ability to define the character not only through their dialog,

but also through the visualization of the character. The author adds another dimension

to the side of her main character by including background history. In combining all of

these tools the characters are given a realistic overtone that makes this short story easy

for the reader to consume and enjoy.

Bibliography

Allende, Isabel; ?The Judge?s Wife;? The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature

(Fourth Edition); pg 422- 427; Bedford Books; Boston, MA; 1997

Shelly, Mary; Frankenstein; Penguin Group; New York, New York; 1983