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Introduction

The story " Good Country People" by Flannery O. Connor is about a wealthy woman, Mrs. Hopewell, whose daughter, Joy, is a hard headed philosopher. Mrs. Hopewell's daughter has a PhD in philosophy, something that her mother is not proud. Mrs. Hopewell's daughter, Joy is rude and antisocial, and has a plastic leg which she is sensitive about. The second story is titled " The Life you Save Might be your Own" by the same author. Its characters are an old woman, her retarded daughter and a stranger, Mr. Shiflet. These two homesteads are visited by intelligent conmen who come disguised as holy, principled and intelligent people who would not cause harm to them. Pointer comes as a Bible salesman while Shiflet pretends to be an artistic person greatly appreciative of nature.

Comparison and Contrast Between " The Life you Save Might be your Own" (Flannery O. Connor) and " Good Country People" (Flannery O. Connor).

The similarity between the two stories is the existence women headed families as a result of as a result of deaths of the women's husbands; Mrs. Hopewell (Good Country People) and the old woman (The Life You Save Might be your own). As for Mrs. Freeman, her husband is alive but does not take up his responsibility and she functions just like a single woman.

The main characters are two rich widows who have children, daughters. However, their daughters have permanent conditions whereby Joy who changed her name to Hulga has a plastic leg. Joy lost her leg when she was younger from an accident. On the other hand, the old woman's daughter is retarded and despite being thirteen, one could mistake her for a very young girl as a result of her innocence.

The two women, Mrs. Hopewell and the old woman are also portrayed as women who believe in measuring a woman's worth by their being married. In the case of Mrs. Hopewell, her daughter not being interested in young men seems to be more of a problem than her rudeness. The old woman also confirms this by the way she quickly gives her daughter away. In Mrs. Hopewell's case, she views her daughter's academic achievements as inappropriate for a lady, a reason she loves Mrs. Freeman's daughters more. One was fifteen, married and expectant and the eighteen year old one had endless suitors, something that Joy despised.

There is a difference in the environment of the homes of the two widows. In Mrs. Hopewell's house, the ambience is cold because of her impolite daughter, Joy, who never seems to know when they've exceeded their limit. We see this by the way she receives the Bible salesman when he first comes into the house. She deliberately ignores him and keeps her head down during dinner.

Shiflet and Pointer are undoubtedly spreaders of evil. However, Shiflet seems to have an active conscience and he feels guilty for abandoning the old woman's daughter after marrying her. As much as he still has a self-righteous attitude and prays to God for protection against the negative influences of this world, he recognizes his wrong. This is unlike Pointer who passes Mrs. Hopewell after stealing Joy's plastic leg and feels no remorse. The way in which they commit crimes portrays this also. Shiflet leaves the retarded girl at a restaurant after buying her food whereas Pointer steals Joy's leg and leaves her on the floor begging for mercy.

The widows covered in the two stories are also too trusting of strangers. The

old woman for instance allowed Shiflet to marry her only daughter who was retarded after a short time of knowing him. This is risky for had he been a murderer he would have killed her so as to escape with the car and money and not be traced. Joy on the other hand trusts Pointer too easily and even exposes her vulnerable self to him, giving human opportunity to steal her artificial leg.

A difference exists between Mrs. Hopewell's daughter and the old woman's daughter. Joy is intelligent and has little interest in young men whereas the old woman's daughter has a mental disorder and does not understand anything going on around her clearly. She is often jovial with a positive attitude while Joy seldom laughs, flirts or agrees with anyone.

Conclusion

These two stories depict women and their subordinate position in the society, and the effects of that perspective. They are vulnerable to many dangers and unable to make sound decisions according to the story. For example, the old woman even had a car which she never used since her husband died because she could not drive.