

Kate chopin's the storm book review

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During Queen Victoria's reign (June 1837 - January 22, 1901), there were very specific gender roles that men and women had to aspire to. Sexuality was soundly repressed, with the upper classes subscribing to the Cult of Domesticity - the idea that women were meant to be submissive, pious, pure and focused on the domestic duties of the home. Meanwhile, men were allowed to work, dominate the household and their respective marriages; women were absolutely subjugated during this time, making it even more frustrating for them to refrain from taking hold of opportunities (both sexual and economic) offered to them by the prosperity of the Gilded Age. In Kate Chopin's "The Storm," this hypocrisy and the problematic nature of this perspective is brought to light, as the need of women for equality and independence overrides these Puritanical belief systems.

Calixta, a good, virtuous wife, is caught in a violent storm that keeps her inside and away from her husband. Because of the violent, primal nature of the storm that surrounds her house, Calixta begins to come out of her shell and welcome the beauty and sensuality that has been missing for so long from her life. The storm becomes a metaphor for her affair, and the effect it has on her marriage (the town). As the real storm rages around her, it becomes symbolic of the passion that lies within her, desperate to get out. The storm damages the town immensely, indicating the intensity and forcefulness of her encounter with Alcee - "The rain beat upon the low, shingled roof with a force and clatter that threatened to break an entrance and deluge them there." The use of this intense language is not unlike words used to describe a particularly rough sexual experience; the deluge Calixta threatened to feel was lust for Alcee, and a longing for being a pretty,

sexually desirable young woman again.

Even the force of the storm seems to pale in comparison to their lovemaking - “ They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms.” The intensity of the storm is meant to be minimal next to the sheer need and fulfillment Calixta gets out of making love to Alcee; the parallels between the force of nature and the intensity of her sex with a former flame are apparent. Their lovemaking even extends somewhat past the apex of the storm - “ The growl of the thunder was distant and passing away. The rain beat softly upon the shingles, inviting them to drowsiness and sleep. But they dared not yield.” This scenario demonstrates both Victorian women's desire to be sexual beings, and dispels the notion that Victorian women could not be seduced at home. As for my own experience, I adore Chopin's message and wholeheartedly accept it; the Victorian Era was a time of puritanical and patriarchal control of women, in order to treat them like property. I think Calixta, while she makes an unfortunate decision, is justified in the unhappiness of her marriage; I fully believe in the ability for women to have equal social, economic and sexual status as men, and this story above all else proves that women should not be repressed and oppressed by controlling men. I believe men can learn a great deal about treating women with respect, and acknowledging their status as human beings that should not be kept under house arrest. Women can also learn from the story, understanding that their sexual desires and their lives as human beings should not be oppressed and downtrodden by patriarchal gestures of control and power.

Works Cited

Ward, Candace, and Kate Chopin. " The Storm." Great short stories by American women. Dover ed. New York: Dover Publications, 1996. 89. Print.