

Mother and child
relationships in the
stories "your shoes"
and "the son's veto"
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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mother and child relationships in the stories “ Your Shoes” and “ The Son’s Veto” Essay Sample

I will be contrasting two stories, which were written to highlight issues about communication in relationships and social status. The two stories are The Son’s Veto, which was written by Thomas Hardy in 1891. The title The Son’s Veto means a strong negative vow, which was made by the son. The other story is Your Shoes written by Michelle Roberts in the 1990’s, and the title means how the mother symbolises the daughter through her shoes. Although the two stories are written at completely different times there are still a lot of similarities and comparisons, which can be drawn up between the problems in a mother and child relationship.

The story line in Your Shoes is about a mother and her daughter has run away, leaving the mother in the situation of having a mental breakdown, the mother then starts to think about her life and why the relationship between her and her daughter has never worked out. The plot in The Son’s Veto is the life story about a woman called Sophy, which is the main character. She marries a man, which of a higher social status. Ironically when her son grows up he had a very aristocratic upbringing and sees the difference between their classes, and is embarrassed of her presence amongst his rich friends.

Both stories have been written with a large chunk involving the characters past. The structure of Your Shoes is not in correct chronological order, but the writer has done this for a reason. The writer has explained about the past of the characters lives so the reader can link the past to the present and acknowledge why the situation is happening. The story is written in first

person narrative. We can tell that the mother is in a stressed frame of mind because she can't keep to one subject and switches to the past then to the present.

The events are occurring in this order briefly; the mother is in the daughter's room talking to the daughter's shoes. She first says her daughter has run away starts to talk about her childhood and then hints the child has an eating disorder. She goes on to talk about her daughter's friends and how her generation is different. The mother through this play constantly refers to her own life not in correct time order. The narrator explains relationships using shoes to symbolise the feelings. From her past other woman in her family had similar relationships "Sturdy with a strong arch and small toes".

She is saying that the woman in her family all had the same feet, maybe representing there all linked whether they like it or not they are family. Now that the daughter isn't there to hold her parents marriage together the future has a hint of destruction and is not looking optimistic. The Son's Veto is of a similar structure it has a narrator but in an omniscient narrator, he knows all about the characters and their lives and past. The narrator gives an objective view unlike Your Shoes when the mother's view is biased.

Roughly The Son's Veto structure goes like this. At the beginning Sophy is with her son Randolph in a park. On the way home the son corrects the mother about her grammar, this triggers a daydream and so we learn about her accident and how she came to be in the present situation. The story then flashes to the future where she is a widow and has intentions of marrying an old friend whom she knew when she was young. The story ends with the end

of Sophy's life at her funeral, and you learn what happens to the other characters.

The character has done this to keep the reader reading on and also to make sure the reader understands the situation of the character Sophy and why this is happening. In the beginning of *Your Shoes* the mother is in the daughter's room talking to her shoes. Very quickly we can learn she is depressed "I thought I knew you as well as I knew this house". This indicates that she didn't really see what her daughter could do, and may of seen the surface of her behaviour (perhaps what she wanted to see).

We then judge from the mother's use of language she is facing a type of mental stress "you're not here any longer so how can I speak to you? The narrator is asking rhetorical questions she knows that she won't receive answers for them because she is talking to herself. She then clearly symbolises the daughter as the shoe "might pick a shoe from the rug and hold it like a baby". The fact that she misses her daughter a lot makes the ordeal worse. After the mother has explained the daughter has run away she hints that her daughter has an eating disorder "I'd catch you raiding the kitchen cupboards", she doesn't say the child has an eating disorder.

This may show that she ignored the problem and may of kept it in the dark not to blot her reputation. The reader by this early stage will realize that the relationship between the mother and the daughter was like this for along time. In the beginning of *The Son's Veto* the main character Sophy and her son are at a middle class gathering "the effect of some local association to raise

money for some charity". So this shows that their status is a respectable one in the social system of the 1900's.

One the way home the mother is talking to her son when she makes a mistake in her grammar her son at this stage is educated enough to correct her " Has, dear mother - not have! " From seeing the son can correct the mother she must have had a less educated background than him. During the daydream we learn of how she became invalid (when she was serving her master) he was so touched that he decided to marry her. Later in the story the son is embarrassed of her presence and disgusted at the idea that of the mother marrying a working class man " It will ruin me".

This proves he is not willing to commit " social suicide" like his dad. The reader can see that this isn't a strong relationship if social status can easily get in the way. The relationship difficulties in Your Shoes is the mother's assumptions about the daughters friends " that Vanessa for instance" the mother likes or tries to dominate all aspects of the daughters life. Also the mother ignores to many of the daughter's problems for instance her eating disorders " I'd always urge you to eat proper meals".

The mother should know what to do if she has a teaching job in domestic science " getting into college to do domestic science". This indicates that she may have of denied to her self that her daughter has an eating problem. The point in which I stopped feeling sorry for the mother was when she said about her daughter " I've always thought of you as just an empty headed blonde" this to me portrayed the mother is quite snobbish. In one point of the story I saw the mother as inconsiderate " then you had to go burst into

floods of tears". The mother may not know what is happening in her child's mind.

But she tries to express her love in a different ways. " We've given you everything a child could possibly want" but the daughter didn't seem to appreciate the mothers taste in presents " Throwing my presents back in my face". This must of caused grief to both of the characters. Unlike in The Son's Veto it is the son, which is snobbish. This type of attitude from the mother may have provoked the daughter to rebel and try to act more grown up by smoking and having sex. The writer has shown both sides of the situation by explaining the past of the characters lives.

The writer achieves the readers feeling of sympathy for the daughter because of how the mother treated her. In The Son's Veto the difficulties in the relationship between the mother and son relationship is that the social gap between the relationship is too wide and the fact the mother isn't educated enough " on the use of was and were, which did not beget a respect for her". Sophy must have been an outcast in these middle class gatherings because of her speech. Now days many people do not speak correct grammar but they are not discriminated by it.

It shows that your family background and your education judged your status. But bearing in mind that Sophy could of avoided this even though she had an accident she could of got a job as a seamstress " and she had an aunt a seamstress". It is quite ironic that at the end of her life she spends most of her time braiding her hair " It was almost the only accomplishment she could boast of" she could be making money for doing the same thing and not

having to cope with a pig ignorant son. This shows that woman didn't really have the place to refuse to man of a higher status for her hand in marriage.

The writer makes you feel sorry for Sophy, through out the story he has achieved this by the narrators description of her, her character, the way her son has treated her unfairly, and she is crippled. The end of Your Shoes is the beginning of the end of their marriage. The mother locks the father out the room and is quite hysterical " let me hold you while you cry". She is talking to the shoe and is convincing herself that the daughter is home. We see evidence that the mother is neglecting the husband " your father will be home soon.

I've locked the bedroom door", it's likely that the mother will go into some type of deep depression and will spend more time in the daughter's room. Or the daughter might have of not got along with the dad so she might place the blame on him. We don't know if the daughter will come back home. The future of the characters in the story doesn't look good. In The Son's Veto the ending to the reader is gloomy and pessimistic. Sophy dies " a funeral procession was seen approaching" Sophy's life ended unfulfilled because she couldn't marry Sam.

We also see she was very depressed towards the end " Why mustn't I marry Sam Hobson" she is wondering why she even made that promise. The character Sam is ironically rich in the end but he is not happy because his love Sophy has died, and he really wanted to share the business with her. " Standing at the door of the largest fruitier shop" Sam made it to the top and Sophy was his motivation. Randolph gets what he wants a good reputation,

but he is bitter " looked black as a cloud at the shop keeper standing there" I think Randolph is bitter at the series of events in his life.

The main differences in *The Son's Veto* and *Your Shoes* are that the daughter is a rebel in *Your Shoes* but the son in *The Son's Veto* tries to be civilized and not barbaric. This is different from the type of reputation, which the daughter in *Your Shoes* wants to achieve. Also Randolph receives a lot of emotional support from his mother and he rejects it. When the daughter in *Your Shoes* doesn't receive this kind of attention and has suffered on without her mother's emotional support. The children both get away with trouble and are spoiled.

In *The Son's Veto* the mother tries her best to communicate " he seems to belong so little to me personally" this shows that he has rejected her attention and her low image to his society prevents her living with him. I think the narrator in *Your Shoes* she doesn't really know how to show her feelings but she has expressed her love through buying presents. She put a lot of effort in these surprises " I'd gone through so much trouble to give you a surprise". The daughter never used to appreciate these efforts of affection.

Both children care more about what their friends think, and in *Your Shoes* she tries to fit in a lot with her friends and what they do " had sex by the time they were fifteen" . The daughter of wanted to fit in and gone with the flow. The girl may have of looked for comfort in her friends rather than her family. While Randolph thinks he should take after his father and his mum can't provide what he wants so he goes to friends of his own social status and he claims, " it will ruin me" he wants not to commit social suicide.

The children in the two stories face problems, which are caused in the house but the problems are created by Society initially. The main differences in the parents from both of the stories are that the mother in *Your Shoes* is quite independent. "Then I went ahead and learnt about nutritional science" this is a contradiction if she can't even help her daughter with her eating disorder. The mother in *The Son's Veto* is the opposite of this the mother is not educated and she is still struggling with her grammar "he is so much educated and I so little" in this case the child is more educated than the mother.

The father in *Your Shoes* doesn't play an important character but we know him to neglect the upbringing "Your father slept through most of it" this is why the daughter may of felt she didn't have enough love, and didn't get on with the dad. In comparison the father in *The Son's Veto* the father is quite an important character and he is the ideal role model for Randolph and he becomes the same profession as his father. The son became a priest in the end "a young smooth shaven priest" he had achieved his fathers footsteps. Randolph tries to justify his actions towards Sophy as protection of his father's memory.

The mother is opposite to the mother in *Your Shoes* she listens to her husband and did not receive education. The similarities between the parents is that they do not get on with their kids like in *Your Shoes* "Not like your generation" this is a common statement as it shows that the mother felt there was a gap between her and her daughter. The mother in *The Son's Veto* doesn't get on with her son and she feels alienated away from him "that he

is not really mine” this is because he doesn’t really share his emotional side with her.

They both have problems from society, which acts like obstacles in their relationships with their children. In *Your Shoes* it is peer pressure and under aged sex “ lots of girls had sex in your class by the time they were fifteen” so the daughter probably saw it as a trend. While in *The Son’s Veto* it is the arrogance of the higher-class society that causes the problems because Sophy was never educated properly her vocabulary isn’t that good. I think the strongest relationship is the one between the mother and daughter in *Your Shoes*.

This is because I think the daughter at least made an effort to grab the parent’s attention even if it was in a bad way. But Randolph wanted to obliterate his mother from his life. We also see that the daughter got along with other members in her family “ She loved you more than she loved me” the mother is quite envious that the granddaughter gets on more with the grandmother than the actual daughter. But Randolph doesn’t mention visiting any other members of his family from either side.

He is probably still ashamed of his father’s mistake of marrying the mother. For the mother to admit that she feels a stranger to her son “ that he is not mine” is quite a thing to say. When the mother in *Your Shoes* still is affectionate “ Let me hold you while you cry” she still loves her and wants her to be a baby and give the attention where it was needed. What the writer is trying to say in *Your Shoes* is communication is important to maintain a good relationship in the household.

Also that both parents should help to raise a kid. Personally I think that the daughter should of have at least talked to some one not necessarily her family but maybe friends (the right type of friends). The issues in The son's Veto are not relevant to today's society seeing as there is not such a big social gap and woman are independent now, but it shows being arrogant is not how a person should be if they want to get on in this world.

Despite societies growing ability to discuss sensitive issues and provide information on the television and on the Internet. Yet the teenage pregnancies rates still increasing, and there are more divorce rates. Is the root of the problem we have capitalist based thoughts or are there other reasons? To me communication does not look like a satisfying answer and in the future we will see if these solutions contradict themselves.