

Robert frost and edwin arlington robinson essay sample

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In comparing the works of Robert Frost and Edwin Arlington Robinson the reader cannot overlook the contrast in character development and the ideas exhibited by the authors with respect to the plight of the character. How the characters fail or succeed in dealing with situations, unpleasant circumstances or the issues of life is the foundation that separates them as authors.

In Robinson's poetry the protagonist is described by the narrator as having reached a level of contentment with his unfortunate yet real circumstances. In "The Tree in Pamela's Garden" the theme of isolation is demonstrated through Pamela's submission to her neighbor's notion that she never experienced love. When Pamela remarks "let the men stay where they are" the author suggests that Pamela's source of love could come along, but she has committed to the idea of being alone (Robinson 948). Robinson establishes that Pamela has loved, however this fact will not be evident to others as it is now solely in Pamela's memory. Robinson explores the depths of individuals and the pain they experience. Pamela suffers from public scrutiny and speculation meanwhile her feelings are never expressed causing her to further isolate herself. This is made evident when Robinson writes "her neighbors - doing all that neighbors can To make romance of reticence" (Robinson 948).

In Robinson's poem "Aunt Imogen" the aunt is startled by the overwhelming love the children have for her, yet she is resigned to never experience it with the same maternal instincts of her sister. Realizing that "the triumph was not hers" (Robinson 945) she has accepted life as a childless and unmarried

woman only capable of imparting love as an aunt and nothing more.

Robinson writes “ that she who had so little sunshine for herself should have so much for others” (944). Robinson deals with Aunt Imogen much like he does with Pamela, two women capable of love and affection yet isolated with no hope of gaining the time lost in their lives. In describing Aunt Imogen he writes “ The mystical fulfillment of a life that might have once... But that was all gone by” (945).

Robert Frost’s approach in writing is more inclined to offer choices for his characters and not confine them to their plight as is seen in Robinson’s works. Frost’s “ On Mending Wall” challenges the reader to ask whether separation in the form of a fence or a wall is important to the building and maintenance of relationships. When considering fences he writes, “ Why do they make good neighbors?” (1061). Frost also finds his neighbor to be isolated in his way of thinking and proposes that he let his mind step out of the confinement that the wall proposes and perhaps see the wall more as a symbol and not so much as a living breathing artifact. “ Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder If I could put a notion in his head” (Frost 1061). Isolation of thought favors the man on the other side of the wall regardless of anything the narrator may say to persuade him. Frost writes “ I could say elves to him” (1061). The narrator offers choices to his neighbor and can say no more. As the poem ends his neighbor reiterates his position and states once more “ good fences make good neighbors” (Frost 1061).

Similarly in “ The Road Not Taken” Frost concentrates on the individual and his choice to alter his future by defining which path he will take. Despite both

roads being similar he writes " And both that morning equally lay" (Frost 1061). The narrator is determined to express which road must be taken. When he declares " Oh I kept the first for another day!" the narrator's sigh speaks to the isolation he felt, for rather than taking the right path he chose the wrong one (Frost 1061). Frost writes " I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference" (1061). After the sigh the narrator emphasizes that perhaps his choice was not the one he would have preferred for his life, but no less the narrator has given his character a choice.

The commonality between Frost and Robinson does end with them being from New England. Frost dares his characters to fight the knowledge of convention and offers a sense of hope and vitality in life whether directly or indirectly. Frost's work begets a certain enthusiasm in his readers while exuding a certain optimism. The reader feels a sense of completion when reading Frost because the characters he describes fully evolve no matter their fate. Conversely Robinson's eloquence is riddled with passion and emotion for his characters. He however fails to launch them wholly and they seem to be weighed down by incidences in their lives, thus confining them further to a world of internal isolation. While Robinson allows his characters to dream it is only in the context of their plight, never offering a break in the cycle but rather acceptance. These great writers had opposing ways of developing a character's emotions and realizing their innermost ambitions; their primary difference lies in Frost's optimism and Robinson's pessimism.

References:

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