

# Janus

Literature



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Janus An would always have an intention before writing the of a play and the case of Janus is no exception. Janus is the of a Roman god and the role that the protagonist of the play, Andrea played is very similar to the legend of the Roman god, Janus. Andrea was depicted as a woman that tried to reconcile between two world and this is quite similar to the Roman god, Janus, who is also known to be the god of the past and future events. It is on the basis of this comparison that the significance of the title of Anne Beattie's Janus becomes clear for all to see. According to Roman mythology, Janus, the Roman god is always shown to have two faces and the life of Andrea in Beattie's Janus is also in two phases. Andrea was actually at a loss on how to bring her two worlds together. She could not integrate her love life with her sentimental attachment to a particular bowl. This shows the difficulties that humans face when trying to forget their pasts and do away with things that do not really matter in their lives. It was not until Andrea learnt that the bowl that she was sentimentally attached to was a present from a man, whom she had an affair with in the past that she began to realize the emptiness in her life. Thus, the fact that Andrea was attached the bowl showed her inability to let go off her past. The bowl that Andrea cherished so much was actually an empty bowl and this was actually symbolic of Andrea's empty life. The emptiness of the bowl also shows that Andrea's inability to forget her past is the reason that she could not cope with her current life and her relationship with her husband. One could also say that Andrea's resolution to hold on to her past is the reason that her future looked bleak, if one considers the state of her current life. Andrea's sentimental attachment to the bowl could also be seen if one considers a line of the book that says " bowl...was both subtle and noticeable—a paradox of a bowl." (Beattie 65). This further shows the

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parallelism of the title of the play and the Roman god, Janus and further justifies the significance of the title to Anne Beattie's Janus. The similarity between the Roman god, Janus and Andrea in Beattie's Janus could also be seen, if one considers Andrea to be a two-faced woman who was as a deceitful and duplicitous woman and this argument could be supported with one of the speeches of Andrea's husband when he told her that, " why be two-faced...he asked her what made her think she could have it both ways." (Beattie 68). Andrea could then be described as a woman that had the same metaphorical face of the Roman god, Janus, or a Janus-faced woman. This fact also points to the significance of the play. There was actually a void in the life of Andrea, but the fact that she was ill-prepared for this change was the reason of what one could term as a stagnancy in her life. Instead of embracing change, Andrea chose to be sentimentally attached to not only a bowl, but an empty one as she said that, " perfect: the world cut in half, deep and smoothly empty." (Beattie 68). Through this, Andrea has shown that she cannot let go off her past. Andrea's trouble to free herself from her past and relate with her marriage (which was actually future based) shows the significance of the title of the book as Janus was the Roman god of the past and the future in Roman mythology. The fact that the Roman god, Janus has two faces in opposite directions shows that Andrea also had two contrasting values (Perkins & Perkins 1999). This further shows the significance of the title to Anne Beattie's Janus. There are many marriages that collapse due to the inability of the parties involved to forget their pasts and the marriage of Andrea is no exception. The marriage of Andrea was not in any way blissful as she was not happy in her relationship with her husband. Andrea was a woman that could not reconcile her past with her

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future and this really affected her relationship with her husband. It was clear from the outset of the relationship that it would not stand the test of time, for how would a husband cope with a woman that find it so hard to forget her past. Rather than trying to make the love she had for her husband grow, Andrea was very busy loving an empty bowl. It was the fact that Andrea did not give her total commitment and dedication to her relationship that the marriage ultimately collapsed. Andrea was also not quick in making decisions and this was actually what affected her relationship with men. It is worthy to note that a woman that sticks firmly to previous relationships, while in a current one would never succeed in the relationship and this is the reason that the marriage of Andrea was not in way a success. Andrea's refusal to forget her past and crave for an empty bowl was the cause of the internal rift she usually had with her husband. The marriage of Andrea was a gloomy one as it seemed like she was not in any way compatible with her husband. This can be seen in the series of arguments she had with her husband in the play and most of these arguments were based on trivial matters. Anne Beattie explains that the relationship between Andrea and her husband as a dead one as there was no thrill in the marriage (Perkins & Perkins 2000-2003). At this juncture, it is pertinent to note that the intention of Andrea to hold on to the bowl was done in order to derive a certain amount of satisfaction and fulfillment from it. But, the reverse was the case. Rather, than this, Andrea's love for an empty bowl made her unhappy. If there is any lesson that could be learnt from the story of Janus, it is in the fact that humans must let some things go in their lives in order to live a fulfilling and deserving life. Works Cited Beattie, Ann. Janus. " The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction." 4th Edition. New York: Norton, 1990 Perkins, George, & Perkins, Barbara. The <https://assignbuster.com/janus/>

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