

Identity as a Personal Choice

Every day we make different choices. Our choices are always motivated by external factors like social environment, personal relations, and cultural beliefs. In this respect, people strive to get the status established and dictated by the dominant society. This especially concerns the concepts of wealth and poverty where money dictates the choice of identity for some people. Four stories to consider – *The Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin, *The Necklace* by Guy De Maupassant, *Paul's Case* by Willia Cather and *Rocking Horse Winner* by David Lawrence – reveal how social status and external factors stimulate one's personal choice of identity as a desire to conform to the established clichés in society.

The Story of an Hour is the narration about feminine identity and the ordinary roles people take in life. Mrs. Mallard, the main character and fake widow, goes through all rituals of grieving over her husband that are depicted in detail: "She swept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone..." (Chopin 72). The narration makes it obvious that Mrs. Mallard is not burdened with love to her husband since this marriage is dictated by obligation and enforcement. Her strivings to be free and happy will never come true. In the story, we can see that Mrs. Mallard personal choice turns out to be fatal for her.

In *The Necklace*, the author describes a beautiful woman who believes that she is born "for every delicacy and luxury" (De Maupassant 64). By contemplating the contrast between her miserable existence deprived of happy marriage and material wealth, she is mortified by the deplorable atmosphere believing that this is not the life she deserves. She rejects the reality she lives in thus longing to luxuries, especially when she is invited to the solemn evening. By expressing her hatred for

poverty, Mathilde cries out, and "...there's nothing humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women" (De Maupassant 64). Mathilde believes that nobleness and femininity originate from decent social and material status.

Understanding the difference between the world of poverty and wealth contributes to the development of personal choice of the protagonist of *Paul's Case*. Like Mathilde, Paul refuses to live in his world due to the lack of perspectives his poor reality may offer. Being fascinated by the splendor of independent life, Paul is confident that he was not born for living dull and poor life. Paul's reluctance to accept the current norms leads him to death being a symbol of release from poverty and dipping "into immense design of things" (Cather 111).

Lack of love and respect can also trigger a person to shift his/her views toward another identity dimension as it happened in the story *Rocking Horse Winner*. Paul, the protagonist of the story, tries to compensate his mother's indifference to him by money and respectable status in society. His aspiration for being loved triggers him to commit himself to dangerous and hasty deeds leading to a tragic end (Lawrence 156).

It should be admitted that the above stories are vivid examples of how aspiration for identity influences personal choice and personal development. However, all the stories have turned out to be tragic as, in the quest for identity, the main characters failed to recognize and accept the reality. This proves the idea that their personal choices were dictated by dominant societies of their time.

Works Cited

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