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Redeemer, Redemptor, and Redemption

What is redemption but the vindication of one's desires; the reclamation of that which is necessary, be it known or not. And who, or what can provide such a redemption? As we explore the stories of both "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner and "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, we are lead through the road to redemption. Yet, the paths we take to get there are not always so straight and true, for redemption comes at the price of the redeemer.

Self-Isolation, the story of many so hesitant to share. Yet, it comes with more than just physical bars and thrown away keys, but with a guttural fear of what is being denied. For its simple to walk through a door, but difficult to face what is on the other side. When looking into the story of "A Rose for Emily" we're given a unique perspective on what it means to be trapped. "A Rose for Emily" remarks on the life, and eventual death, of a woman named Emily Grierson, living in a small town in the Southern United States. Throughout the story, we learn of the idolization and yet, disdain, the townsfolk had of her. As her life passes her bye and things change, modernize, and advance, she often lacks control of the world around her. Trapped by expectation, trapped by privilege, trapped by social norms so prevalent and mundane that no one dare raise a voice to. Emily is a victim of said confinement, as she was forced to live her whole life at the hands of others. As the second act of the story explains "None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such.", further explaining that her father had driven said men away. At the mercy of her father's vindication, Emily wasn't allowed to choose her romantic partner. It wasn't until his death that she was left truly alone. Yet, what would have been passed off as a simple familial death, is much more than that. To Emily, she lost more than a father, rather, she lost an enforcer; a man who sheltered her put her on a pedestal, and isolated her from the crowd. For the Griersons were not a rich family, but a presumably pretentious one. As Wyatt, Emily's Great-aunt explained, "the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they were", thus resulting in the townsfolk having preconceived notions about Emily's character. Yet, the same people who perceived her as pretentious were the same people that contributed to such an image. When allowed to make her own choices, Emily takes to a foreman and Northerner named Homer Barron. Emily is ostracized by the townsfolk becoming a topic of gossip believing she, "was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people." They perceived her as better than Homer, someone who shouldn't stoup to the level of a laborer. It's these notions that trap Emily into the image of what society deems fit. Yet, despite all, there is still redemption for Emily, someone to save her from the captivity of change: death. Emily is truly is at the mercy of

others, so much so she'll go to extremes to end her isolation and lack of control by making one thing hers, Homer. As revealed by the end of the story and Emily's subsequent death, Homer entered the Grierson household and never left. Having little control in her own life, her last act of power was taking the life of the one she loved. Along with her inevitable death, her redemption was solidified. She was her redeemer, able to get away with, and essentially take with her, the only thing that was hers; her love until death, in the home unchanged with time, frozen in a moment everlasting. This is made evident through the narrator's description of the upstairs room, describing Homer's dead body placed in a bed amongst wedding decorations and the indentation of Emily's head on the pillow next to him. It can be said that Emily is the embodiment of a paradox: seemingly weak, grounded, and controlled for the majority of her life, yet strong and adaptable in her convictions and throughout time. No longer was it "Poor Emily" the impenetrable woman who had lost her status in the eyes of many, but a human, One with temptation, with perverseness, one who was but a broken and lonely recluse, isolated from the world around her.

Isolation at the hand of others is a common thread amongst our stories, yet where they differ, is the subject's ability or control over said isolation. Where Emily was awarded new connections, such as with Homer along with leaving the house, our narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" can be seen as truly alone. "The Yellow Wallpaper" follows our female protagonist and Narrator as she is driven to madness, isolated, and belittled, losing both her sanity and clarity when recounting her life confined to her home and more particularly her bedroom with revolting yellow wallpaper. Both physically and emotionally imprisoned, our narrator is forced to conceal her writing and limit her activity. Unable to socialize and engage in ways she enjoys in fear of her "nervous condition", as her husband diagnoses, she is forced to turn to the only thing she has left, her imagination. It's due to said imagination that she begins to hyper-focus on her bedroom wallpaper. The narrator states "The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering, unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.", This is one of the narrator's first introductions to the yellow paper displaying a seemingly natural disdain for it. However, what begins as innocent develops into much more. Hate transforms into curiosity, transforms to obsession, as our narrator loses to the self-proclaimed mystery behind the yellow wallpaper. As we learn more about her isolation, her obsession only develops as a direct juxtaposition between the two. "I'm getting really fond of the room despite the wallpaper. Perhaps because of the wallpaper. It dwells in my mind so!" The narrator states, only to remark on the immobility of her bed next. It is this back and forth that highlights the truth of her isolation. As the story develops, her dialogue becomes more sporadic as she places her fixation strictly on the wallpaper and dissociates from her everyday life. She loses her sense of reality in a way that can only be described as paradoxical. The less she reflects on the world around her, the better she grasps herself and vice versa. She begins her more psychotic episodes by identifying with the underlying pattern of the wallpaper, a woman trapped behind bars looking to get out. "At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamp-light, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes

bars! The outside pattern, I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.” This can be directly compared to the state of her bedroom and living situation as earlier on she mentions her “barred windows” and a nailed down bed. The more she identifies with the woman, the more she becomes manic. Tearing at the wallpaper with her teeth and hands, she's trying to free the woman trapped behind the paper. Thus, by liberating the woman, she is liberating herself. As the story comes to an end, our narrator meets her redemption at the hand of herself stating, “I’ve got out at last,” said I, “in spite of you and Jane! And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!”. By tearing at the wallpaper, gnawing at the bed, and destroying the room, the narrator is also breaking free from the mental confinement she has been placed in by her husband and the people around her. She releases the “woman” from the paper, thus releasing herself, her redemption.

What was a comfort for Emily (her home) is but a burden to our narrator. Yet become the decreed walls lied the redemption of our protagonist. Tough the narrator behind “The Yellow Wallpaper” may not have faced death to seek her redemption, she did suffer a breaking point similar to that of Emily. Though we never learn much of the inner workings of Emily’s mind, we do know that homer is certainly an important factor in Emily's redemption. Her desire for control over her life can be presumed to be masked by her “love” for Homer. It is what allows her to regain control over what little she has left. However, the same can not be said for our narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper”. Our Narrator is trapped by her love, Her husband, who, under the pretense of “knowing what's best for her”, confines her both physically and mentally, not allowing her to do even the most mundane of task. It is due to his confinement and her obligation to him that she rebels, reaching her redemption through the destruction of her room.

When looking through both stories, were given two similar yet unique perspectives on the effects of isolations and the subsequent redemption of the protagonists'. Redemption does certainly come at the price of the redeemer, for not every story ends with a triumphant Savior. We are exposed to events that make each woman their own redemption be it through love or loss, redemption is much more frivolous than it seems.