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Introduction to Women Writers

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Justification

 Should a woman give up her passion for love? Taking inspiration from the character of Malda in The Cottagette, I found what I believe to be the true motive behind the story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Malda is on the quieter side and takes strength from her strong and seemingly all knowing friend Lois. When Malda seeks the affection of Ford Matthews, Lois tells her that she needs to be more domestic and a homemaker. Malda then gives up her passion of art and embroidery in order to tend to the kitchen and cook. It’s obvious to see that Malda’s need to be love is so strong she changes her actions in order to attract Ford Mathews. However what one wouldn’t expect is Ford’s reaction. Ford does ask Malda to marry him like she hoped; however under the condition that she would resume her art and passions and give up life in the kitchen. This takes Malda by surprise, but Ford explains that he fell in love with her while watching her be herself and enjoy her passion.

Malda says, “What was one summer of interrupted work, of noise and dirt and smell and constant meditation on what to eat next, compared to a lifetime of love? Besides – if he married me –I should have to do it always, and might as well get used to it now” (Gilman 6). It’s clear to see that she fully expected in order to find love with Ford, to become this domesticated housewife. Is the prize really worth the price? Malda more than eagerly was ready to give up her art. Luckily, she found a man that wouldn’t let her do so, a man who fell in love for exactly who she is. But not all women are this lucky.

Lois on the other hand, is a strong force of female empowerment. Malda looks to Lois for advice and reassurance. She describes Lois as rational, saying “She had been married; --unhappily married, in her youth; that was all over and done with years ago…and she said she did not regret the pain and loss because it had given her experience. She had her maiden name again – and freedom.” (Gilman 4) The way freedom is synonymous with Lois having her maiden name shows her independence and main difference from Malda, she isn’t seeking love. However since Malda is, Lois offers up her advice, which turns out to be wrong regardless.

As women, we have to make choices. In my manifesto, Malda’s choice from my point of view is pretty clear. She values life long love over her passion of creating art. Lois also makes a choice. Lois values her freedom and chooses to remain unmarried, Malda says, “I knew several who wanted to marry her, but she said ‘once was enough.’ I don’t think they were ‘good marriages’ though”. Malda is the loud music of my manifesto, who isn’t afraid to voice her thoughts. Malda and Lois are two very different characters. Lois found that marriage didn’t guarantee happiness for her. Malda on the other hand explains her love for music, the cottagette, and her artwork with such affection, however still is willing to give it all up for love and marriage. There is an incompleteness Malda feels without love and marriage that Lois does not share; Lois associates marriage with domesticity and housework, which is why she gives Malda that very advice.

So, in conclusion, true love doesn’t need either partner to give up a part of him or herself, true love accepts every part or flaw…exactly the way it is. Malda finds herself in a better situation than she imagined when Ford says “It is not true, always, my dear that the way to a mans heart is through his stomach; at least its not the only way. Lois doesn’t know everything, she is young yet! And perhaps for my sake you can give it up. Can you sweet?” (Gilman 8) to which Malda replies her astonishment “Was there ever a man like this?” Ford telling her not to change is represented in my manifesto by “some men being able to see the beauty in the music of a woman”. As the music is what drives the female spirit, and real love is achieved when their partner embraces it.

Works Cited

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. The Cottagette. 1909-1910 ed. Vol. 1. N.p.: Forerunner, 1996. Print.