
Femininity And Gender Stereotypes In Anne Of Green Gables And Eight Cousins

The theme of femininity and also gender stereotypes had formed an integral part of the different literary works which had been composed over the years. In this regard, Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" and Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" are important ones since both of them are redolent with the themes of femininity and gender stereotypes. Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" (1875) narrates the story of Rose Campbell, a sickly and lonely girl, who is sent to the home of her aunts and uncles after the death of her parents while highlighting the manner in she copes with life and finds happiness (Garcia). On the other hand, Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" (1908) narrates the adventures of an eleven year old orphan girl named Anne Shirley, who is mistakenly sent to a family who has asked a boy. Gender stereotypes is the most important theme which dominates the two literary works under discussion here and the protagonists of the two novels, namely, Rose Campbell and Anne Shirley show a high level of femininity. This compare and contrast essay intends to analyze Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" and Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" in the particular context of the themes of femininity and gender stereotypes.

Femininity forms an integral character trait of the characters of Rose Campbell and Anne Shirley and rather than just being a character trait the particular concept had being deeply ingrained within the plot of the two literary works under discussion here by their respective authors. For example, it is seen that Rose Campbell, the protagonist of Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" is highly feminine in nature and displays the major character traits which the girls of her age normally display. As a matter of fact, it is seen that despite being forced to live in a family which is not her own and also with seven boys who as a matter of fact are her cousins it is seen that she tries to retain the major feminine characters that are peculiar of girls. She justifies this behavior of her through the words "It is necessary to do right; it is not necessary to be happy" (Alcott). In the particular context of Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" it is also seen that the character trait of femininity dominates the personality of its protagonist, namely, Anne Shirley. For instance, it is seen that upon coming to know that she had been mistakenly sent to the family of Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert who rather than a girl wanted a boy she accepts her present situation with feminine grace and dignity (Blewett). More importantly, rather than protesting against the situation and thereby seeking a remedy it is seen that she tries her best fit into the family to which she had been sent by becoming a part of the same. This aspect of her character becomes apparent from the line "It is ever so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable" wherein she explains her decision to stay at the home of Matthew and also her desire to have fashionable clothes (Maud). In addition to this, it is seen that just like

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Rose Campbell of Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" she also spends a substantial amount of formative years with the boys of the house that she had been sent to yet she tries to retain the dignity or the grace of her character or for that matter her femininity. Thus, it can be said that in terms of the presentation of the theme of femininity and also the manner in which the protagonists display the same both of the literary works under discussion here are largely similar in nature.

Rose Campbell and Anne Shirley, the protagonists of the literary works under discussion here form friendship with the other female characters in a bid to retain the feminine nature or the aspect of their character. In the particular context of Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins", it is seen that Rose Campbell forms a friendship with Phebe, the young housemaid at the home of her aunt. It is pertinent to note that this friendship which shares with Phebe not only brings the much needed happiness or joy in her otherwise mundane life but at the same time teaches her many important values of life as well. For instance, from Phebe she is able to learn the manner in which one can be happy or cheerful in life even when the situations or the circumstances are adverse in nature (Williamson). As a matter of fact, it is seen that from the relationship which she shares with Phebe she is being able to learn that "A happy soul in a healthy body makes the best sort of beauty for man or woman" (Alcott). On the other hand, it is seen that within Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" as well the protagonist of the novel Anne Shirley resorts to female friends or friendship as a way to bring the much needed happiness or the joy in her life and also to maintain the feminine aspect of her personality. For example, it is seen that just like Rose Campbell she also establishes different kinds of friendships or friendly relationships with the girls whom she encounters in the educational institution at which she studies or other places. In particular, mention needs to be made of the friendship which she shares with Diana Barry, the girl who lives in the house next door. Furthermore, Anne describes her as a 'bosom friend' and the time that she shares with her makes her forget the mundane life that she had to live in the house of Matthew. Commenting on the friendship that she shares with Danny she says that "True friends are always together in spirit" (Maud). However, at the same time it needs to be said that along with the friendship that she shares with Danny she shares a rivalry with Gilbert Blythe, who does her best to make the life of Anne a miserable one. This rivalry that she shares with Blythe is very peculiar of the feminine gender wherein it is seen that the girls generally fight or tease each other over petty things like the color of their skin, hair length or quality and others. In the light of these aspects, it can be said that the construct of female friendship is an important entity which had been used by the authors in the literary works under discussion here to elucidate the theme of femininity.

An important theme of Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" and Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" is gender stereotyping. For example, in Louisa May Alcott's "Eight Cousins" it is seen that Rose Campbell is required to behave and live in the manner in which her seven boy cousins live. More importantly, although she lives with her aunts it is seen that

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she is placed under a guardian since it was considered inappropriate for girls to live without a male guardian or protector. Furthermore, the process of gender stereotyping also becomes apparent from the unorthodox teaching strategies especially designed for girls, which is being followed within the novel for the purpose of her upbringing and education. On the other hand, within the novel “Anne of Green Gables” it is seen that the family of Matthew wants to adopt a boy since they are likely to further the prospects of their family rather than the girl and this is one of the major reasons why Anne in the beginning sections of the novel feels unwelcomed at the home (Shields). Thus, it can be said that the theme of gender stereotyping is another important common aspect between the two novels or literary works under discussion here.

To conclude, Louisa May Alcott’s “Eight Cousins” and Lucy Maud Montgomery’s “Anne of Green Gables” although differ in terms of the story that they narrate yet at the same time it is seen that they are largely similar in terms of the themes that they highlight. For example, the above discussion makes it apparent that the themes of femininity and gender stereotyping are common in both the literary works and also deeply ingrained within the plots of the novels. Furthermore, the effective usage of these themes have not only rendered effectiveness to the two novels but at the same time enhanced the reading pleasure of the same as well.

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