

Justice, Women, and Law in UNE

Question One: Law and Literature's Relationship to Justice

In Robin West's book "Caring for Justice" (1999) in her chapter "Law, Literature, and Feminism" West discusses how literature has the potential to expose the ways that the law is tied to literature. Her book shows a unique viewpoint on topics like gender and sexuality.

At the end of West's book, she reviews three structural reasons as to why law and literature have bonded influence on each other. I think that Robin West's third reason, their relationship to justice, sticks out most to me because the law is indifferent when faced with fictitious literary interpretations and depictions of it, and that there is no real clear or obtainable meaning of the word justice.

She also notes that there are often underlying themes in literature that reflect a well-developed understanding of the nature of law and justice. In other words, literature often explores and reflects upon legal concepts and principles.

- "The Type-Writer Girl" by Grant Allen written in 1897
- "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" by Anne Bronte written in 1848
- "Ruth" by Elizabeth Gaskell written in 1853
- "Mr. Meeson's Will" by H. Rider Haggard written in 1888



Skepticism

Despite West's essay having thought provoking ideals and confidence in dealing with touchy subjects, I feel that overall she can't convince people who have based their beliefs around the opposite ideals that feminism reenacted through law is the right direction to turn to.

This is not to say that I disagree with any of her ideals, I just find that a sense of "justice", whatever that word may mean to any which person, will always be hard to achieve when she's writing for a more liberal audience.

Preface about each novel:

All of this leads me to say how the theory of Robin West's third reason, law and literature's relationship to justice, can be applied to the four women in our novels. In this scenario I direct if students Helen (from "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" by Anne Bronte, 1848), Ruth (from "Ruth" by Elizabeth Gaskell, 1853), Augusta (from "Mr. Meeson's Will" by H. Rider Haggard, 1888), and Juliet (from "The Type-Writer Girl" by Grant Allen, 1897) in the twenty first century will be accepted into UNE via Frances Power Cobbe's essay "The Education of Women" (1870).

- Juliet Appleton from "The Type-Writer Girl". In this novel by Grant Allen written in 1897, the portrayal of the struggles of women trying to make a living.
- Helen from Anne Bronte's "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" published in 1848. In this book, Helen's husband, Arthur, squanders her inheritance and controls her finances.
- "Ruth" by Elizabeth Gaskell portrays Ruth, a young orphaned woman who becomes a victim of seduction by a wealthy gentleman, resulting in her becoming pregnant and shunned by society.
- Augusta from "Mr. Meeson's Will" written by H. Rider Haggard in 1888 acts as a ward of Mr. Meeson. Augusta is under the legal guardianship of Mr. Meeson, who has significant power over her life and future.

Ruth

I feel that Ruth from “Ruth” by Elizabeth Gaskell (1853) would have the most difficulty getting into UNE because she has no previous education and has been a single mother.

- A lack of education can leave young girls naive and unprepared for the challenges of life
- She would not fit in at college or school in general either way.
- She'd major in English or social work with a possible minor in a music field or creative writing.



Helen

Helen from the novel “The Tenant of Wildfell Hall” by Anne Bronte (1848) would be accepted into UNE because universities today often seek to admit students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

- Talented artist, musician, and writer in the novel, Helen might be able to demonstrate her creative abilities by contributing to UNE’s arts and humanities programs.
- She has a strong sense of ambition and self-motivation, and is willing to work hard and overcome adversity in order to achieve her goals.
- Knowing that Helen has an appreciation towards the arts, I feel she’d major in Art, with a possible minor in Art Therapy.

Augusta

Augusta from the novel “Mr. Meeson’s Will” by H. Rider Haggard (1888) would be most likely to be accepted into UNE because she has a lot of perseverance and drive.

- Despite facing numerous obstacles and challenges, Augusta remained determined and persevered in her efforts to achieve her goals.
- I feel that Augusta would have difficulty at college because of her tattoos, which are mostly normalized these days but she may be bullied because of how prominent they are
- I feel she may even venture to go abroad considering she went to New Zealand already, knowing that Augusta has an appreciation towards literature, I feel she’d major in English.

Juliet

Overall, I feel that Juliet from the novel “The Type-Writer Girl” by Grant Allen (1888) would be accepted into UNE because of her constantly challenging what’s considered “normal” in the 19th century.

- Juliet questions the traditional responsibilities and expectations placed on women throughout the narrative, criticizing the patriarchal conventions.
- She clearly expresses her belief in gender equality and the right of women to work. But despite this, I feel that Juliet would have difficulty at college because of how she lacks formal education and qualifications
- she could potentially pursue a major in literature, creative writing, journalism, or communications. She also shows an interest in social justice issues, so she could potentially major in sociology, political science, or women's and gender studies. Though she would get into UNE, I'm not sure if she'd stay here considering she's moved around companies so much in the novel and seems to want only what exceeds her expectations.

Bowles's Drawing Book for Ladies: a how-to book designed as a reference to teach women how to draw flowers as part of their education

All of the women in our books have a fondness for the arts and some tie to education and feminism. What these flowers represent through a feminist light to me is how they have been used as symbols of resistance and empowerment by feminist activists in history. Many also wore flowers as badges and carried them in their protests.

A quote from each book about each girl's tie to the arts and what they mean to them are as follows:

Ruth- "Floating away to that bounding music—now far away, like garlands of fairies" (chapter II)

Helen- "My drawing suits me best, for I can draw and think at the same time; and if my productions cannot now be seen by any one but myself, and those who do not care about them, they, possibly, may be, hereafter." (Chapter XVI)

Augusta- "ut then that is because they do not really love their work, whatever it may be. Those who really love their art as I love mine, with heart and soul and strength, will not be so easily checked." (chapter XXII)

Juliet- "Juliet was a lover of beauty in all its forms, and she found inspiration in the paintings, sculptures, and architecture that surrounded her." (Chapter IV)



A completed works cited list with in-text citation of all sources:

West, Robin. "Caring for Justice." UNE E-Portfolio. 1999. Thursday. May 4, 2023
<<https://eng216a-fall2016.unepportfolio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2014/09/West-Caring-for-Justice.pdf>>.

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Bronte, Anne. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall., 1848. Print.

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Cobbe, Frances Power. "The Education of Women." UNE E-Portfolio. Thursday. May 4, 2023
<<https://eng216-s23.unepportfolio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4402/2014/10/Cobbe-The-Education-of-Women.pdf>>.

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