

ENGL1102

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The Mummy Invokes His Soul: A Portrayal of Women Suffering Under and Overcoming the
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and crumble,” but with an erotic whisper to her partner that she is lusting after him. This is the last time she will have to subject herself to being his puppet, so she is playing the part of the seductress with all she has left inside of her.

The apparent disgust that the narrator feels as she encourages the man is seen in “prick with pores this crust!” (5). Her word choice and punctuation are harsh and boiling with rage. The alliteration in “prick with pores,” attached to the cacophonous word “crust,” makes this line the most horrific and piercing of all the lines, as if she screamed it inside her swelling head while he puts his hands on her like she is his creation. Alas, a deep releasing breath of hopefulness follows the climax of sexual intercourse: “And fall apart, delicious, loosening sand” (6). The little bit of remaining life that filled her veins is finally released, and the woman is a part of the boundless earth that is regarded as nurturing and pure.

For the first time, the narrator is truly exultant, for she is no longer confined to the world that repressed her soul: “Oh, joy, I feel thy breath, I feel thy hand / That searches for my heart, and trembles just / Where once it beat” (7-9). She is watching the man caress the lifeless body that caged her for so long when he discovers her hushed heart, the heart that he had symbolically taken hold of and stolen for his own. By owning her heart, he had stolen her identity as a woman. His position of power gave his life meaning, but without it, he is reduced to the mundane life that she was so familiar with. She is jovial and pokes fun at him, “How light thy touch, thy frame!” (9). With her new perspective, she is able to look down on him and see a pathetic, weak, chauvinistic man who can no longer restrain her.

With an imagined sarcastic sauciness in her voice, the woman says, “Surely thou perchest on the summer trees . . . / And the garden we loved?” (10-11). Her partner is still of the world in which he has the sense that she no longer has as a part of the earth that once allowed her to take in the scent of a flower and exult in small joyous moments, but he is surrounded by beauty that he could not enjoy anymore, for he is reduced to the dry, captive life of nothingness without her, the emptiness that he had subjected her to. She ends her statement with sweet, vengeful sarcasm, for she is free: “Soul take thine ease, / I am content, so thou enjoy the same / Sweet terraces and founts, content, for thee, / to burn in this immense torpidity” (11-14). She is finally swept away by the wind, soaring over the landscape that she was bound to, knowing that she did not let him triumph over her.

Although “The Mummy Invokes His Soul” was written by two women under an assumed male identity, their hopeful, progressive way of thinking transcended the ideals of their Victorian time period. The overarching message of oppression is apparent from the title to the very last word of Field’s poem and is expressed through vivid language that reads as if the narrator were telling you her story wrought with disgust and sarcasm. The garish comparison of her dry, barren life to his green, thriving life is essential in transferring the feelings of oppression the narrator feels to the reader, as well as the brutally honest repulsion she feels for her partner as she invokes his soul for the purpose of getting revenge and setting herself free.

Work Cited

Field, Michael. “The Mummy Invokes His Soul.” *Literature Portfolio*. Ed. Christy Desmet, D. Alexis Hart, and Deborah Church Miller. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007.