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Cultural Anthropology

She Un-names Them

**Who is the central character? Why do you think the author is rewriting this ancient story? What is she trying to tell us about language and power and about language and gender specifically? Can you think of any examples of groups who were/are denied a “voice”?**

The central character in this short story seems to be a personification of Eve, the first woman in existence according to the bible. Eve seems to be going around the garden of Eden and un-naming the different animals she comes across species by species. The purpose of this seems to be so that eve can grant the animals and to a certain extent herself freedom from the roles that she and the animals where given when they got named. An example of this in the book is seen when Eve talks about convincing the dogs, ravens, and parrots to give up their names. “These verbally talented individuals insisted that their names were important to them, and flatly refused to part with them. But as soon as they understood that the issue was precisely one of individual choice, and that anybody who wanted to be called Rover, or Froufrou, or Polly, or even Birdie in the personal sense, was perfectly free to do so, not one of them had the least objection to parting with the lower case generic appellations that had trailed along behind them.”

I think the author rewrote this story to modernize it, so that more people can enjoy it and understand the themes present within the story as they can now better relate to it. the author is trying to state that language is how we can differentiate between things and that gives language power. In the story through the power of language the various species where given roles to fulfil when they were named by Adam and his father, this also includes Eve, by un-naming the animals and then herself, Eve is freeing them and herself from the bonds that where cast on her. What the author is trying to tell us about how language and gender correlate, is that language is used to assign roles, roles can give a person a sense of security but those roles are very limiting and don’t allow for maneuverability, so in Eve’s case it was better to cast the role aside in its entirety and venture out into the unknown rather than be a slave to it.

Throughout history there have been many groups of people that have been denied a voice. One prominent example is the African American people in the united states. When the African people where first brought to this country they where stripped of their names and given western ones, this was a way of stripping a person of their voice and culture. Through this action they where assigned their new roles in the society where they now reside. Another such group that was stripped of their voice were women, who had to conform to a society that did not grant them much freedoms but expected them to fulfill their given roles.