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WRT 102. 055

31 March 2015

### Irrational Thinking

#### Textual Analysis: "So Much Water So Close to Home"

Irrationality is cognition, thinking, talking or acting without inclusion of rationality. It is more specifically described as an action or opinion given through inadequate use of reason, emotional distress, or cognitive deficiency. The themes of behaving irrationally, suspiciously, and with distrust towards all men in general, is brought out in the story "So Much Water So Close to Home" by Raymond Carver.

Carver introduces Claire, who acts very irrational, especially towards men, in order to warn the readers of such a behavior. These irrational acts are caused by the fact that she believes that men are the reason for this girl's death and the murder of women in general, and she shows this by the way she reacts to what Stuart says and towards the men in the story. When unable to deal with what her husband tells her about what happened to the girl, she reacts by "Raking her arm across the drain board and sending the dishes and glasses smashing and scattering across the floor" (Carver, 70). No person in the right state of mind would randomly smash glasses and break dishes for no reason. It is evident that the actions Claire takes are in relation to the fact she feels her husband is somehow responsible for the murder of the girl. While at the gas station she is very rude to the man trying to help her, not letting him check her tires to make sure her trip to

the girl's funeral is safe "I said no. No! They look fine to me. I have to go now" (Carver, 86).

This portrays how she doesn't trust any man she meets, even men who are clearly not involved with the girl's murder or the death of any other girl. Even though the man is trying to do Claire a favor all she can do is act irrationally and refuse the help. This is the first time the reader sees not only her clear distrust towards her husband but in all men in general. On the way through the mountains a man in a green truck offers to follow her to make sure she drives safely. When he offers she refuses to roll down her window for him and says "please, I have to go" (Carver, 88). This is another example of how Claire not only has suspicions about her husband but all men in general. Another man has offered to do something kind for Claire and she yet again refuses to accept it. It is clear that no matter what the circumstances are, due to the murder of the girl, Claire has lost all trust with all men. Her irrational behavior continues in the story when she decides to sleep on the couch instead of with her husband "I need to be by myself tonight" [she says] "I need time to think" (Carver, 86). It is easy to see that Claire does not trust her husband enough to sleep with him in the same bed because he is a man. Carver has introduced many such incidents in the story that portrays the mental effects of irrationality.

Carver illustrates the distrust among men through Claire's actions and thinking. When someone needs to believe something so considerably, they can make things up to justify their thoughts. It is quite likely that Stuart was acting fine but Claire's doubt took hold of her perspective causing her to see these characteristic ways of a guilty person. This thought causes Claire to notice minute details, which would usually be ignored by the common person. At the dinner table she watches his every move, "he seems tired, edgy.... He looks at me and looks away again" (Carver, 69). While on a drive with Stuart, Claire thinks "so much water so close to home...why did he have to go miles away to fish?" (Carver, 76). These are usually the

mannerisms of someone who has done something wrong and having shifty eyes is an unconscious way of showing guilt, but in this case it could be Claire imagining these things. She thinks the men went to the lake so far away so that no one could witness them murder the girl. Even Stuart notices his wife's suspicion, saying "don't look at me like that. Be careful now. I mean it. Take it easy, Claire" (Carver, 76). He says this because he can feel the distrust Claire has in him. Claire concentrates on Stuart a lot during this story because she is convinced that he can kill women. "He rubbed his hands up and down my back, the same hands he'd left with two days before, I thought" (Carver, 73). His hands are an issue as she connects them to the hands of the man who slayed the girl at the lake. She can't deal with the idea of being touched by him, especially in a sexual manner. Usually evil is related with a burning touch. "...Stuart comes up behind me and touches my arm. His fingers burn" (Carver, 74). This directly correspond to the fact that Claire continuously suspects Stuart and only think's about how Stuart being a man makes him responsible for the girl's death. Yet again, this is another instance pointed out by Caver of Claire's irrational thinking. He also portrays the effects of extreme suspicion.

While going in the car with Stuart she says, deprived of any incitement "they said they were innocent" (Carver, 76). She goes on to explain how men who murdered her beheaded her and threw the corpse in the river, but claimed they were guiltless. Claire's thinking also becomes very irrational when she connects the murder of the girl with one that happened near her native when she was in high school. She makes this connection because in both murders men were accountable. The link she made is vital as it shows that she believes no man is blameless. Her thoughts translate into the idea that every man has "blood" on their hands. She believes that every man, in one way or another is responsible for the death of women. Carver again points how a series of incidents can affect the thinking of a person.

Claire thinks that all men are accountable for the murder of the girl, which causes her to act irrationally, suspiciously, and with distrust to all men regardless of how they have affected her in her past. Throughout the story Claire constantly tries to find ways to prove her husband's guilt. Finally, she brings in the Maddox brothers' murder and the one at the lake, representing how even though men can say that they are innocent of the murder, they are still somehow guilty. Her irrational thinking shows Claire's suspicion in men and also the fact she feels all men are responsible for the murder of women. Her thinking reaches the epitome of absurdity, when she comments that all men are murderers. Carver lays heavy emphasis to describe the series of events that changed Claire's thinking considerably.

More than rationality, Claire lacked the understanding and faith in her husband's words. Even when Stuart said that he was innocent, she never trusted him. Claire had to think peacefully and listen to her husband's words and later should have judged his character. Raymond Carver, effectively brings out the message of understanding, rational thinking and trust among people.

"It is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream" (Edgar Allan Poe).

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