Tamura Toshiko’s ” A Woman Writer” Essay, Research Paper

To Live and To Write

“A Woman Writer”

The first story by Tamura Toshiko, “A Woman Writer” was incredibly upsetting. This intelligent, successful woman seems very unsatisfied and unhappy, though it would appear that she has everything that she could ever want. Looking deeper though, one sees her anguish in her marriage to a man who feels no emotion toward her, whether it be love or hate. All she receives is total indifference from this man who was her first love; a man she will always care for deeply. This void of emotion in her life has driven her into a severe writer’s block, making her feel as though “no matter how hard she wrung (her brain), her bag of wits offered not so much as a single word that was alive not half a phrase that smelled of warm blood.” (pg. 11) To be at a place in your life when you can’t reach within yourself to find any inspiration except daydreams that do not fulfill your needs seems heartbreaking to me.

The woman’s use of powder also showed her displeasure with herself and the world around her. She could not be without this mask on her face, even in sleep. When she does not wear this white disguise “her emotions become jagged; she felt awful, unduly suspicious, and it showed in her expressions. Her mood deteriorated; she became sulky and lost all desire to be flirtatious.” (pg. 12) She was a woman living in a world that was not reality, and she cannot express herself unless she is living in her fantasy. The problem that has occurred though, is that she is now unable to reach any of her emotions, even with her masks and temper tantrums.

She finally starts to realize how truly discontented she is when she talks to her friend about each of their definitions of love. Though I don’t necessarily agree with the writer’s friend’s conception of a true love without compromise, she does point out how easy it is to lose yourself in a relationship. The writer believes she is “worthless” in some way, and she accepts the pain her marriage has caused her. While accepting this she loses a sense of herself. Her friend however, on the contrary is willing to live apart from her lover because she will not give herself up for anything. She expresses this best by saying that “self is the art one creates?.to live for the sake of one’s art is, after all, to live for oneself.” (pg. 16) The woman writer no longer knows herself, which is why she cannot write. She tries to find inspiration from others around her, whether they make her happy or miserable, and cannot remember how to dig into herself to break the terrible cycle she has found herself in.

There is some hope however at the end when she reflects on the actress. This scene has brought her back to the fictional world. No longer is she dwelling on those around her, but looking inward at what she finds appealing. By delving into her desires, and not the desires or emotions of those around her she can hopefully find the motivation to write again. Through this writing with any luck, she will be able to find herself again.