Orthodoxy in community life (how living in a small isolated community is represive)

Red door

In the “Red door” orthodoxy in community life is a common theme that is shown throughout the short story. Ian Crichton Smith grew up in a rural community not dissimilar to the one described in this story. This is influenced his writing. As is demonstrated in “The Red Door “he often found life in these Protestant communities and making Murdo feel he has to do conform to other villagers. In Murdo we see the emotional and intellectual isolation of the individual that can be particular feature of these environments.

“Indeed because he was a bachelor he felt it necessary that he should be as like the other villagers as possible.”

This is a theme that recurs in some of the other stories in this collection like mother and son, The Telegram. This quotes shows that Murdo feels pressured to be like all the other villagers as he believes that if he is himself he will be thrown out of the village and will be looked down upon by the other villagers. He has been living in the village quite a while now however hasn’t built up the courage to be himself but he is use to the routine that all the other villagers follow. As the story goes on Murdo realises that he doesn’t like following the rules of the village and decides to do something for himself for once instead of what the other villagers want.

The Telegram

In “The Telegram” orthodoxy in community life is a common theme that is shown throughout the short story. Crichton Smith depicts a society simmering with underlying tensions and petty rivalries where people treat each other with suspicion and contempt. All the villagers seem to attend church however their attitude completely contradicts the basic principles of Christianity. The fat woman has an insular attitude in the way she spreads gossip about the misfortunes of others however the thin woman is the complete opposite of the fat woman meaning that they contrast.

“The thin woman who was thinking that the fat woman was very stupid. But most of them were; they were large, fat and lazy. Most of them could have better afforded to send their sons and daughters to university but they didn’t want to be thought of as snobby.”

This is a theme that recurs in more of the stories such as mother and son and the red door. This quotes shows that the fat woman is conforming however the tin woman isn’t as the thin woman sacrificed everything for her son to go to university but the fat woman didn’t want the other villagers to go against her and call her snobbish.

Mother and son

In “Mother and son” orthodoxy in community life is a common theme throughout the short story. Crichton Smith shows that the conditions are hard, the lifestyle is unwelcoming and the landscapes are dull. John is isolated as he cares for his mother and lives in the highlands and islands which means that there isn’t many people around them. The Son doesn’t seem to fit in with the boys as he spends most of his time caring for his mother making him isolated from the rest.

‘Why should anybody laugh at me? They don’t laugh at the other chaps.’

This is a theme that reoccurs in more of the short stories such as the telegram and the red door. The rhetorical question shows he wants to know what makes him as different to the rest as he is singled out. We see that it is only his mother who is singling him out as she wants to keep him to herself as he is the only person we know, who cares for her. As it’s a rural community, no one can see what his mother is doing and because of this he is creating a cycle as instead of going out with friends, he stays at home with his spiteful mother.