The Robber Bride Essay, Research Paper

Depending on how you look at Margaret Atwood s The Robber Bride, Timson

calls it an upmarket melodrama whereas Martin refers to it as a novel

confronting politically correct feminism . The truth is it isn t

either of these. While some of the situations are greatly exaggerated,

this book comments on the way that women interact with each other on a

day-to-day basis. Atwood tells the story of three women, and how they

are drawn together because they have all been double-crossed by a mutual

female friend, Zenia. These characters seem so real that in some cases

they are reminiscent of actual acquaintances. The male characters in

The Robber Bride, however, are dull and lifeless. We never get to know

any of them in great detail. On the other hand, Atwood does a wonderful

job of describing the setting, which really allows the reader become

more involved in the story.

The main message in this novel is that women have drastically different

relationships with each other than they do with men. Not being a woman

myself makes it difficult for me to determine if this message is true,

but nonetheless, Atwood does have a lot to say about the way females

deal with each other. The character Roz constantly runs into problems

in the business world. It s complicated, being a woman boss. Women

don t look at you and think Boss. They look at you and think Woman, as

in Just another one, like me, and where does she get off?

The female characters do not come across as more emblematic than

real. as Timson suggests. Charis decides how her day is going to be by

swinging a crystal above her head. This behavior reminds me of an

acquaintance who once tried to lecture me on the power of crystal

vibrations . This may be because Atwood s characters are stereotypes

and everyone is bound to know someone like them. However, this realism

provides common ground between the reader and the novel, which makes it

easier to read.

As Male characters in The Robber Bride are very poor and have absolutely

no depth. Or as Timson put it and male characters who, it can be

argued, are uniformly portrayed as so hapless, brutal or pathetic you

could forgive them for forming a support group, leaping off the page and

tearing the author from limb to limb. Their only purpose is to serve

as vehicles for the female characters to injure each other. For

instance, West barely ever speaks and Tony treats him like a baby,

sheltering him from everything and everyone. She believes that it is

her job to protect him, and this comes from Zenia almost taking him from

her.

This same basic experience with Zenia is common between the three

women. She tried to steal each of their husbands, and in some cases,

succeeded. It is for this reason these women are drawn together, not

because of pain or fear, but because they want to be able to share their

thoughts with someone who has gone through the same thing. Simply

knowing that someone else has been humiliated in the same way gives

these women a sense of comfort. Charis for instance does not even need

to talk when she is around Tony and Roz, she just needs their company.

Martin described The Robber Bride described as the closest thing to a

sensate interactive video game that comes between two covers

Unfortunately, being very tedious at some points, it does not compare

very well at all to a fast-paced video game. In fact, The Robber Bride

is the furthest thing from fast-paced as exciting parts are few and far

between.

One thing that made the book much more readable was the way in which

Atwood described important moments. For instance, when Charis was

getting raped as a child, she described her body as made of something

slippery and yellow, like the fat of a gutted hen. As Martin said, to

some extent this detracts you from the real horror that is occuring,

however, by using this kind of graphic description, the sense of disgust

and shock is heightened. This is very effective, because currently

people are desensitized by modern media. Atwood just provides that much

more material to be shocked by.

Atwood also does an excellent job of creating atmosphere in The Robber

Bride. She describes the setting, in this case Toronto, to such an

extent that this novel could almost be used as a history textbook. She

even goes as far as to name stores along the street and describe their

d cor. This gives you an excellent visual picture of what is happening

in the story. In some parts, Atwood even talks about the recession that

was going on in the early nineties, which gives you some insight into

people s attitudes at the time. For example Resonance, the store Charis

works at, is being turned into a discount store called Scrimpers.

In the end, The Robber Bride delivers a strong message about the

relationships between modern-day women. Atwood seems to be telling us

that there is a great deal of competition in a woman s world but there

is also a lot of comfort and friendship. I am unsure as to how my male

friends would interpret this book, but I feel certain women would easily

relate to it.

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