Analysis of “Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage” by Alice Munro

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Alice Munro’s book of nine stories goes a long way in depicting both lovely and frustrating scenarios. The book, Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, and Marriage offers a clear depiction of everyday encounters that lead to the realization of underlying truths and misfortunes that lead to unexpected pleasures and delicate moments. The author uses the collection to show the essence of preserving life—its contradictions, repetitions, and imperfections at all costs.

Everyday Life, Loss, and Contradiction

That said, she follows the main character to the end and illustrates the pains she endures to the point of losing her mind and memory. She shadows her loving and caring husband, who is ready and willing to do anything to help maintain her sanity. These stories openly consider broken trust, old age, mental illness, death and adultery as essential themes. In essence, her writings relate to reality where the essential aspects of life, such as constant changes mixed with endless reiterations, are ironically and inconsistently highlighted.

Johanna and the Unexpected Transformation of a Prank

In the early stages of the story, the author describes the feeling of the protagonist, Johanna, on wearing a suit: “It feels as light as silk, but it wears like iron.” Similarly, the story’s content is weighty but spoken in a simple language. The language is simple, but afterwards, the truth is heavy. “…when she was finished, it shone like candy. Maple candy—it was bird’s-eye maple wood. It looked glamorous to her, like satin bedspreads and blond hair.” Johanna falls in love with the first husband of Sabitha’s mother in a series of love letters faked by Sabitha and her friends. What initially started as a funny prank turns serious when Johanna believes the letters are true and begins arrangements to meet with him. The author turns the children’s joke into a serious marriage where the old housekeeper is soon filled with “such a warm commotion, such busy love” after the marriage, forcing the readers to rethink the way they hope the story to end. This element of the unexpected advice they need to search for similar pearls.

Death and Thematic Variation Across the Collection

The title story is perhaps the only one that doesn't dwell too much on unfaithful partners and death. There are many instances that continued presence of death after many reiterations are depicted but never forthcoming. The variations in themes also apply to humans and Munro uses this collection to illustrate this fact using the delicate differences which showcase their importance and revel in reality.

Narrative Gaps in Post and Beam

From a different angle, Munro's stories seem incomplete and disjointed. It is possible that most of her collections were successfully based on half the "drama" that at some point felt irregular and forced. This can be illustrated using the sixth story in the collection, "Post and Beam," which opens with a captivating line about the death of Lionel's mother. "Lionel told them how his mother had died," followed by a short description of how the mother had called her husband a minister after applying her makeup. She said that she was in the last minutes of her prediction. This opening statement is undoubtedly fascinating and attractive to any reader, but the disappointment comes later when the story is not completed. Attention is instead shifted to Lorna and her husband, Brendan, who are visited by Lorna's "country cousin" in the middle-class home. Along with lessons on bargaining with God, nuances of longing, a tad of unexpected friendship and other details, there is nothing about Lionel's mother's illness or the conditions she coped with until her death. From the above description, it seems the opening statement was only meant to give the story an exciting start, which it greatly achieves at the expense of undermining the actual events in the rest of the collections.

Grief and Renewal in Comfort

Onwards, "Comfort," which is arguably the strongest story in the collection, is like a "gem among polished stones." The introductory paragraph is sufficiently detailed, such that it introduces us to the main characters of the story, Nina and Lewis. This makes the audience comfortable handling the events that happen later on as they are equipped with the necessary background knowledge. As the story continues, the author illustrates the hardships the two lovers had to go through to cope with Lewis' fatal illness. "The question of suicide, which they both agreed was justifiable on the basis that it took away the discomfort and extreme pain." (Thacker, 187) By following Nina closely, Munro's story shows how one can overcome initial denial and pain to start a new life. Although the story does not have many characters, the reader can follow the events closely and feel part of the action. Indeed, this is a comfortable ending to a stressful ordeal.

Realism Through Frustration and Imperfection

From the precedent, it is clear that the book, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, and Marriage describes real-life events from all perspectives. It is the incorporation of frustration in the story that gives it such magnitude of competence. The constant shifts in time, alongside the acquaintance of many characters and their failures of faith and successions of death, are what make the story an interesting one. The repetition of critical variations is what makes us rethink our lives and enables us to transform weaknesses into realistic strengths. From the above arguments, it is also true to say that as much as Munro illustrates the ugly side of life, she also presents a beautiful aspect of life as well.

Works Cited

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