That Hideous Strength by C. S. Lewis (Analysis)

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Introduction

That Hideous Strength is one of the most liked of C. S. Lewis's stories and, at the same time, one of the most criticized of them all (Lewis). The story is, in a way, an amalgamation of many themes that can be seen separately, running their separate course. It is a realistic story of marital squabbles and gender roles in a struggling marriage where the husband is aloof, and the wife has too much pride to show her vulnerabilities. The reasons for both the characters' uncertainty about marriage are focused on the fact that the characters are equally ambitious in their own right. At the same time, the story could be seen as a story of the apocalyptic land that is waiting for a saviour, and he finally comes and saves it. The story is, at the same time, a very witty and shrewd criticism of the college politics that was fervent in the era the novel was written. The book is a mixture of so many different elements that should seem inappropriate together, but the way they are put together is masterful. Some critics claim that the elements of violence and the number of characters and villains are too large, and that makes the book too monotonous, but the stories and plot from every single perspective have their importance and relevance. The book, however, needs more than average intellect to understand as some lower-level students might not understand the book.

Gender Roles and Relevance of Gender

The role of gender is very different and modern in the novel than in some of the contemporary works. The focus is on the centrality of the two characters who have their importance and significance without the intrusion of the other and they still end up together at the end. The novel starts with a fight of a sort between the couple. The two main characters of the novel stay separate all through the novel, and they find each other in the end. The traditional gender role for Jane should have been to make house and cook, but she defies the norm and becomes a clairvoyant. Mark does not have much to do with her as he is ambitious and wants to feel important and become a part of an organization that he does not know a lot about. The communication between the two is not good either, as they do not tell each other much, and they keep the most important happenings to themselves. The intent of the novel seems to be to make the characters grow on their own and become a strong couple as they would end up with the knowledge that they have to have humility. There is a new and improved definition of gender in the novel that shows that women and men have the same importance in social

settings as they can have their different utilities.

Satire on College Politics

The satire on college politics is one of the important themes as it can be seen in a dominant amount in the novel. The dreams of one of the protagonists related to college are one indicator. The narrative has an overlapping number of characters that are from college, and the acquaintances of Mark and Jane from the college coming up all the time is another pointer to the importance of college life and politics in collegial settings. The fact that C. S. Lewis was himself a learned person involved with different educational institutions meant that he knew about a lot of ills of the politics in these settings. The subject of college politics does seem like a satire on the real situations that he probably experienced in his life as a student and as a faculty member and academician. The college's politics is turned into a gruesome apocalyptic reality that leads to the destruction, invasion, conspiracy, and saviours from other planets to come. The scope of the novel is huge, and its treatment of college life shows a deeper meaning about the importance of changes in the college structure that can only be seen as an underlying meaning associated with the novel.

The Apocalyptic Land

The scenario of the novel starts with a slow-paced familial setting and seems nothing like it later turns out to be. The overall story of the novel is a story of many struggles and pains that people suffer due to the need for domination of the N.I.C.E., an organization that is hell-bent on making the world their slaves and the people need outside intervention to save them, or else all is lost. The great wars like World War I and World War II can be seen as the premise of the story that human beings cannot be trusted with strength and power. Humanity is a sick entity that cannot control its whims to dominate others, as can be seen in the two great wars. As the novel was written during the period of war, it is understandable that Lewis was fascinated and disgusted by the will of a few people to destroy so much for personal gain.

Conclusion

The novel is a very skilful interpretation of various themes in one story. The gender roles, collegial settings, apocalyptic world realities and themes of war are some of the most important ones. The novel deconstructs reality and readies it with a new guise that serves to limit the gruesomeness of real life.

Work Cited

Lewis, C. S. *That Hideous Strength*. Reprint edition, Scribner, 2003.