

A captivating story of family dynamics - The Young Bride (2016) by Alessandro Baricco

A brief literary analysis and comparative study by Alexandra Landor (@girlnexttothebookshelf).

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, USA, August 10, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "There are thirty-six stone steps to climb, and the old man climbs slowly, cautiously, almost as if he were collecting them, one by one, to drive them up to the second floor: he the shepherd, they meek animals."

Unlike the very first sentences of Baricco's novel, which is entirely set in the familiar surroundings of his homeland, its plot does not evolve in a linear, step-by-step way. It zig-zags through hallways, interiors and half-lit rooms of the mansion owned by the uncanny, mysterious aristocratic family of five (Mother, Father, Daughter, Son and Uncle). The author slowly reveals their dark history and the profound undertone of their complicated relationships. Baricco, primarily known as the man behind the internationally acclaimed book, 'Silk', now presents us with a fable-like, quirky and highly imaginative story.

'The Young Bride' starts off by the lengthy description of the family's breakfast routine that runs for hours and hours. Through the details of such a seemingly simple and relatable activity Baricco masterfully outlines his characters and sets the tone for the entire book. Then the story's inciting incident happens, one morning the gluttonous breakfast gathering gets interrupted by the arrival of a strange young woman, the Bride. We get to know that she fled from Argentina and is looking for her fiancée, the Son, whose identity is highly cryptic. From this point on the balance of the story shifts onto the importance of 'waiting' and no characters, no scenes, no storylines bear with palpability. In other words, Baricco plays with his readers' minds and expectations in his very specific, lavishly symbolic way.

As the Bride becomes a more and more integrated part of the family's life, through her experiences we dig deeper and deeper into the characters' personalities, pasts and personal connections. But whenever the story could turn down on the path of absolute nostalgia the writer brings in heavy elements of eroticism and desire. Thus gluttony is not the only inherent sin that runs in the family, sexuality is being represented as the tool of complete power and superiority. Although Baricco always stays poetically elegant even when describing moments filled with animalistic lust. However, an old brothel grows into one of the most essential parts of the plot by functioning as "the door" to hidden truths and chapters connected to different family members. While the characters are barely capable of controlling their desire for hedonism they are cautious of keeping themselves far away from all forms of emotional attachments. This emotional restraint, as we slowly discover, is also an element of the family's 'inherent legacy'. Past, present, fiction and reality melt together just as like the abstractly portrayed figures on the cover of the book. The plot evolves in two separate storylines, one focuses on the Family's life while the other presents the most inward thoughts of the author.

Personally, the novel sometimes reminded me of a classic Jane Austen story mixed with recurring elements of books by E. L. James. I would describe 'The Young Bride' as a sometimes chaotic rollercoaster ride, rich in interesting aesthetic choices but now and then hardly understandable for its switches between the narrations from third person to the first. Also, interesting enough, I have recently seen a short movie called, 'Haze' (written/directed by Dora Endre) that shares many of the themes bursting out on the surface of Baricco's story.

They both concentrate on a small Italian family from the countryside with secrets and tragedies having their heavy stamps on their members. Loss, a strong fear of death, moralities and the vitality of facing our own truths also play a key role in both pieces. Aesthetically, 'Haze' projects a deeply nostalgic tone through its sepia-esque coloring, first person narration and classic, minimalistic setups. Furthermore, both 'Haze' and 'The Young Bride' deals with the themes of the loss of innocence through darkness and tragedy, the longing for real emotions and most importantly for love and the importance of always keeping our heads up and moving forward by learning from our past.

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