

A Perverse Romance: A Tourist Dance to Art and Satirical Provocation

Pru La Motte

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A Perverse Romance by Pru La Motte is a bold and exciting satirical take on tradition, desire, cultural expectations, and guilt.

Hephzibah Brown yearns to move from her native Australia to a new place rife with distinct inspiration. She has recently left art school and is always on the hunt for intriguing male models. When she meets Cedric, she decides to draw him.

Cedric, also known as the Imp of Perversity, coerces Hephzibah to travel to Ghana with him so that she can illustrate the tourist book he plans to write. Hephzibah decides instead to write a book of a different nature—a novel about tourists, specifically a woman tourist who has esoteric notions and who yearns for something different.

The text focuses on Hephzibah's creation of her novel, pulling ideas from the unusual new environment she finds herself in. Billed as "a continuing satirical energy promoted by absurdism and the mockery of shame," the text does not disappoint, eccentrically covering a breadth of topics.

The story is memorable in its approach, and is brightened by unique, compelling writing saturated with vivid imagery. Word choice is precise, yet evokes an air of mystery. The craftsmanship of the writing shines through, and the text is brimming with clear details and compelling settings.

Though it presents ideas in an almost stream-of-consciousness manner, the narrative remains linear, if interspersed with tangents that are pertinent to story development. Occasional footnotes provide clarifications for particularly obscure references and allusions.

Strong, distinct characterization makes for memorable players who each propel the text forward in some way. Hephzibah especially grabs attention; she is both strong and independent, and endlessly seeks meaning in the midst of chaos. Cedric, too—despite being the purveyor of silliness and discord—is fully realized, often acting as the foil to Hephzibah and her diligent storytelling endeavor.

The book delightfully skewers common notions of desire and humiliation, especially in relation to interracial relationships. The implications of race in a struggling African country are thoughtfully explored, shedding light on the voyeuristic nature of white tourists in predominantly black communities.

The text reads as abstract art in motion. One section may be absurd, while the next may be sincere or embellished with literary filigree. This approach is wholly unique and allows for a communication of complex emotions that would be impossible with a more streamlined approach. At times, though, the artful approach makes the story hard to follow, with sections requiring a second or third reading in order to glean the full meaning of the text.

A Perverse Romance is a compelling work of satire full of complex ruminations.

AMANDA ADAMS (September 27, 2017)

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