General

Mockers
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When a group of hippies settles on the outskirts of a small East Coast fishing village, creating their commune and drug-trafficking headquarters in an old farmhouse, one of the local sons is drawn into their fold and seemingly destroyed.

Mockers is a portrait of this village as it passes through time from the commune days of the 1960s to the fall-out days of the 1990s. The progress of culture and industry forever change this village, as described by Dair: “The saturnalia burst like a tick and was eviscerated, vans and small foreign cars in the parking lot no longer possessing pride of place, an open-air drug market dismantled, its passing clientele snatched by neophytes. They blew in through the door of the tavern like parchment, neither fish nor fowl, in that intermediate state of quickening before dandyism created a caricature of fishermen and loggers.”

The characters, more than the plot, drive this novel. It is a study of how one person’s actions ripple through the community affecting everyone. For instance, the novel begins with an old ship captain who has secluded himself in his home and has been rumored to be dying for more than a dozen years. His son is a convicted murderer whose parole has the children from the nearby housing project hiding in hedges and orchard trees, sure he will return home and hoping to be the first to spot him. The commune itself is home to many of the murderer’s old friends, including a “buddha-faced” woman named Holy Cow who surprises even herself when she gives birth to a child in the local tavern.

In Dair’s dialogues the reader is often left with a sense of middle entry into a private conversation. The reader is sometimes unable to understand all the unspoken meaning behind the words because the speakers share a common background that the reader does not. Perhaps it is this feeling of eavesdropping that will drive a reader’s interest.

The author employs an extensive vocabulary, which occasionally slows the action, moves through time and between characters with sometimes cryptic effect, and narrates the

story through observed actions and vague conversations. The writing style is reminiscent of James Joyce's Ulysses.

Mockers leaves one with a Picasso-like portrait that appeals more to the sense of feeling than vision.

Christine Canfield