

Critical analysis of

Literature



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Guerin Brotherhood in The Red Convertible Introduction On the surface The Red Convertible looks like a narrative about the relationship of two brothers, Lyman and Henry. This strange bond between brothers is reinforced in Lyman's unusual statement in the opening part: " I owned that car along with my brother Henry Junior. We owned it together until his boots filled with water on a windy night and he bought out my share" (Nagel 2004, 41). Louise Erdrich successfully combined tragedy and humor in this short story, a narrative of teamwork and competition between two brothers who struggle to keep hold of a luxury car, and are distinctly changed by their common passion.

Analysis

Erdrich brings into play the red convertible throughout the narrative as a representation of the relationship of Lyman and Henry. In the story's beginning, the two brothers purchase, refurbish, and travel with the red convertible mutually. These events symbolize a usual bond prior to the impacts of war. The relationship takes a different turn when Henry joins the war and Lyman expresses their parting by dismantling the high-maintenance automobile. Afterwards, when Henry goes home from combat a transformed and damaged individual, he becomes indifferent to the red convertible, and to Lyman. As a response, Lyman batters the car because he feels ignored and uncared for.

The red convertible depicts the ' severed' bond Lyman senses between him and Henry. When Henry sees the destroyed convertible, and his ruined relationship with Lyman, he faces his disenchanted brother, " When I left, that car was running like a watch. Now I don't even know I can get it to start again, let alone get it anywhere near its old condition" (McMurtry 2000, 190).

In here Erdrich makes use of imagery to articulate the anxieties soldiers have concerning the possible status of their relationships once the war is over. They are anxious that their relationships will drastically change or that the bond itself will turn out to be one of the numerous victims of war.

Before long Henry begins repairing the red convertible, symbolizing the patching up of his bond with Lyman. After successfully repairing the car, Henry invites his brother to travel with him, which brings a certain kind of thought to Lyman that their bond has been reconnected alongside the red convertible. Lyman finds out the opposite when his brother kills himself by jumping into the river. Lyman is fully aware that his brother is gone together with their bond hence he decides to drown the car in the river.

Erdrich subtly relates the death of Henry to the drowning of the red convertible and with the demise of his relationship with his brother Lyman. The author exercises this imagery to symbolize bonds/relationships changed by war. It begins strong, the war changes it, and there lingers an anticipation of a return to the past, where everything is okay, but at long last, the war tears down the soldier and his abandoned relationships.

Conclusion

This paper portrays the brotherly bond inherent to the narrative of *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich. The entire theme of the story is expressed through Henry's life. The red convertible is in the beginning the automobile that Henry and Lyman brings to another dimension, the dimension which is quite happy and gratifying for them, but afterwards they have to go back to the real world.

The red convertible is the most essential representation related to the theme of brotherly bond which surfaces between Henry and Lyman when the

former goes home from war; it is the representation of the bond between two brothers which expresses their tightly knit bond when they purchased the red convertible together.

The scene of Henry's death is symbolic because it embodies the loss of Lyman's incorruptibility and the death of the relationship between the two brothers. Henry passes away but for Lyman he will be living eternally. Lyman does what he can to save his relationship with his brother. He is prepared to destroy the red convertible for which he has thoroughly cared for with all his resources and with all his life just to bring back the brother he had before the war. However, Henry refuses to continue living. The red convertible symbolizes freedom, love, rivalry, and a bond that will last forever.

Works Cited

McMurtry, L. *Still wild: short fiction of the American West, 1950 to the present*. Michigan: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Nagel, J. *Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre*. Louisiana State University, 2004.