



Burning Bright

John Steinbeck , John Ditsky (Introduction)

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Written as a play in story form, this novel traces the story of a man ignorant of his own sterility, a wife who commits adultery to give her husband a child, the father of that child, and the outsider whose actions affect them all.

Burning Bright Details

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Author : John Steinbeck , John Ditsky (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Burning Bright for online ebook

Becky says

3.5 Stars

I have a fondness for Steinbeck, and so it is with great regret that I have to criticize this novella. My edition comes in at a whopping 93 pages, and I really think that about a quarter of that should've found its way to the cutting room floor. There are better ways to convey concepts and ideas than repetition. There are better ways of showing emotion than overwrought dialogue. Perhaps if this had been written in more of a standard play format, it wouldn't have felt that way... but working it up as a novel format makes it seem a bit awkward.

But this was an experiment, I think, in the fact that each act takes place in a different setting. First, the main characters are part of a circus, then they are farmers, then sailors. I'm not sure just what the point of this was - it almost seems like they are alternate versions of the characters - but as each one picks up where the last has left off, it's a little... weird. It definitely took me by surprise the first time it shifted, but I stuck with it. It's not like it was a huge time investment.

If the technical aspects of the story are removed, though, and we just look at the themes, it's the Steinbeck I've come to love. He writes about human emotion and need so convincingly, and understands the dynamics of relationship so well, that it's hard not to identify with his characters. I can't say that any of these characters are favorites - they have nothing on Tom Joad or Lenny and George, but they are well-written, understandable, identifiable characters that carry the story, each in their own way.

So, I don't think that *Burning Bright* will ever be a favorite of mine. But it is a decent story (if a bit... unusual) and one which has an interesting morality and ethical dilemma at its core. I'd definitely recommend it... but it's Steinbeck. Like that's a chore. ;)

Yana says

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Jason Koivu says

Step right up, see the world's most philosophical carnies! This experimental play fails, not for the experiment, but surprisingly for overwrought dialogue. Steinbeck tried too hard to develop characterization through speeches, which when placed in the mouths of a circus act become flowery and far too existential to swallow. When Act II switches the scene to a farm, the thing feels like a melodramatic soap opera. Still though, this is Steinbeck and at the very heart of the whole experiment is a quality story that probably would have come across real well if he had stuck with his usual novelization style. A shame, but I suppose it was worth a try. The wiki page for *Burning Bright* explains the experimental side of the play. You should check it

out, it's pretty interesting! <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning...>

Samir Rawas Sarayji says

What the heck is a play-novelette? Answer: this book!

As a novelette - 3 stars because the story is interesting enough to finish (although a bit cliché by now, maybe not so beginning 1900s). Widowed husband remarries and wants a child, he's sterile but too proud to get tested or to admit the possibility. New wife loves him so much she gets pregnant and tries to pass it as his own. The actual father falls for her. Husband's best friend turns a blind eye and comes to everyone's aid when needed. The problem is that the story is rather linear and the conflict is never strong enough. Steinbeck being Steinbeck is so good at revealing the inner nature of his characters that he forgets the need for intense conflict in a play. So why a novelette format? Steinbeck expresses the difficulties he has reading plays and that this form is valid for non-theater productions and the general reader... which brings me to:

As a play - 1 star because the tension is lacking, and going into characters thoughts implies the action doesn't show what the characters are feeling, only the narrative does so. The beauty of reading plays is seeing the eventful and artistic ways in which writers have their characters demonstrate their emotions. Not to mention the awkward dialogue with name dropping - I mean how often do you mention a person's name when you are talking to them? Never. The beauty of a play format is having the tags that you register as you read but never focus on.

Conclusion: should've stuck to writing novels only, Mr Steinbeck, that's definitely your forte.

Natacha Martins says

"Chama Devoradora" é um livro original na forma como conta a história que Joe Saul, Mordeen, Vítor e Amigo Ed partilham. Estes são os nomes que Steinbeck decidiu dar às suas personagens, mas poderiam ter sido outros porque o que eles representam é a espécie humana, as nossas preocupações, os nossos anseios, os nossos desejos e objectivos. As realidades de onde vimos até podem ser diferentes, mas na essência somos de facto muito semelhantes, programados para preservar a espécie, embora muitas vezes pareça exactamente o oposto.

Em três cenários à primeira vista díspares, um Circo, uma Quinta e no Mar, eles vão ser confrontados com dilemas morais, escolhas difíceis. Vão lutar pelo que acreditam, vão cometer injustiças e provocar angústias nos que amam. Vão percorrer um caminho juntos, aprender, crescer e no fim perceber que estavam errados. :)

Foi bom voltar a Steinbeck numa história deste tipo, muito diferente das que lhe são tão características. Uma espécie de experiência literária, explicada pelo próprio no início do livro e que lhe correu francamente bem.

Steinbeck não se recomenda, os livros dele são uma espécie de inevitabilidade à qual nenhum leitor quererá escapar. ?

Milka says

Burning Bright was my first ever Steinbeck piece (I know, I know, WHY HAVEN'T I READ OF MICE AND MEN YET?) so I wasn't quite sure what to expect. As a theatre studies undergrad, I was interested about the play-novelette structure of the piece, but other than that, I really didn't have any expectations towards this one. And I am kind of happy that I didn't, because I was allowed to be surprised about how much I actually find myself enjoying this one.

Burning Bright is one of the books I will probably use in my essay for my American literature class, so I won't get too detailed in this review just to save stuff from the essay itself. But I do want to give an overall summary of my thoughts for you in case you are interested of possibly reading this one.

Burning Bright is set around four scenes involving four people - a husband who wants a son more than anything in order to keep his bloodline running, his wife who is willing to go to the distance to make her husband's dream come true, a young man who becomes entangled to the story through the actions of the wife, and an outsider, a friend of the husband, whose actions and thoughts have a role on how the events roll out. As the story goes on, the lives of these characters get more and more intertwined.

I remember reading the morality play Everyman in university, and this one, slated as a "turn on a medieval morality play" definitely reminded me of that. I actually quite enjoyed Everyman and I think one of the reasons I liked this one is the fact that I was able to form connections between the two texts. I found the way Steinbeck works with different settings very interesting and I have a feeling it will be one of the main things I want to focus on in my essay. The story and the characters stay pretty much the same, but the setting changes, showing the universality of the situation.

As someone who has read quite a bit of plays, I found the structure of Burning Bright to be interesting. Like a play, it relies quite heavily on dialogue. But what separates it from traditional play texts is the extensive way it describes the settings. This allows the reader to imagine the settings more extensively. The story would have worked with just the dialogue, but as someone who likes to visualize things as much as possible, I found this form of "play writing" really working for me!

After reading Burning Bright I am definitely interested to dive in to Steinbeck's other play-novelettes and novels. For a long time, Steinbeck has been one of those authors for me I haven't know much about but have always thought I should read, and I am happy that this one introduced me to him. Burning Bright is entertaining, interesting and quick to read that I definitely recommend especially to those, who like me, have been meaning to read Steinbeck but just haven't got around to doing it yet.

Sareh Ghasemi says

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Hugo says

Nesta coisa híbrida a que Steinbeck dá o nome de romance-peça, os personagens interagem entre si em cenários cambiantes, cada acto é único nesse aspecto, mas as suas motivações permanecem constantes e a acção é perfeitamente linear. Da minha curta experiência, o diálogo de Steinbeck, que ganha ainda mais relevo numa obra como esta, é só equiparável ao de Hemingway.

???? ?????? says

The play novellette is what Steinbeck talking about, but the real thing is that he could't write a play. What he discussed in the foreword didn't convinced me at all. It's a novellette where all events happened in one place every chapter, or a play with a lot of description.

I liked "of mice and men", didn't read "the moon is down", but "burning bright" was a complete disaster, the story is very silly and stupid, the chracters are shallow and unconvincing, the only remarkabe thing is that changing the place and characters sets every chapter.

Annalie says

My husband and I had met each other only a few weeks before I read this unforgettable little novel. He could not believe that a book could make anybody cry so much!

Scott says

My least favorite Steinbeck novel, but I'm glad I gave it a second chance. I still think it's a failure, and by far the least satisfying of his play-novelette experiments, but there are still moments of classic Steinbeck brilliance, in the characters and the descriptions, if not in the story.

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Brian says

A "play novelette" about the Balinese cure for male sterility as Elizabeth Gilbert describes it in *Eat Pray Love*. The dialogue is a little hokey, and sometimes the melodrama is hard to take seriously, but it's still a smart and effective story. I've always liked that vein of American fiction that delivers their sexually charged themes through a framework of insinuation and tension, like Tennessee Williams and old Hollywood. This is among them, although it's maybe a bit more explicit. The coolest thing is a device that Steinbeck uses: he changes the setting in each new act, although the characters and their relationships remain the same. First they are circus performers, then suddenly they are all farmers, speaking and behaving as though they have always been farmers, and then they turn into sailors, although the story is continuous. Of course, there are meaningful reasons for this. But it's also fun.

Tom Bentley says

It boggles that I'd give any Steinbeck work a three-star rating, since I think he's one of the hallowed masters, but this little curio of a book didn't move me. It's such an odd work—he dubbed it a "play-novelette"—set in three acts, with the stage trappings of place and character declaration drawn in, to me, stiff caricature. The speech of the players often has a blustery formality that kept me at a distance, though some passages have the rich Steinbeck hand. Perhaps if I hadn't read a good deal of Steinbeck I could approach this more open-heartedly, but as it was, I was left more puzzled than illumined.

(By the way, I realize I haven't in the least addressed what the durn thing is about, but I just ain't a gonna. So there.)

Chad says

May we all have a friend like Friend Ed.
