Florida International University
University Graduate School

Master’s Thesis Defense

Abstract

Existential Bebop

by

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EXISTENTIAL BEBOP is a collection of thirteen short stories that use humor and satire to address some of the absurdities of human existence.

In some stories, characters are forced to come to terms with their own mortality, such as the six-year-old boy in “A Goldfish Memory,” who learns about death for the first time. Others are forced to deal with its implications, such as the aging couple in “The Sayonara Memorial,” where a husband and wife go shopping for a high-end funeral memorial. Jazz and bebop music provide a backdrop to existential quandaries in the title story, where a thirty-something woman escapes to a jazz bar after being pressured by her husband to have children, and in “Life, Jazz, and a Smoking Gun,” where a gas station attendant is forced to tell a gunman what he lives for.

The comedy centers on human frailties, such as “Weekend in Deceit,” where two couples confront infidelity, while animal points of view are used to look at the philosophical questions in “An Absurd State of Affairs,” where a group of pigs learn that they’re being raised solely for the purpose of being slaughtered and in “A Lizard’s View,” where a lizard trapped inside a house contemplates his fate while trying to escape.

Influenced by the work of Woody Allen, Kafka, and Dostoyevsky, the collection uses exaggeration, surreal juxtapositions, and absurd premises to point to the darker side of the human condition and the necessity for a sense of humor to get us through life.

Date: October 27th, 2017
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Place: Biscayne Bay Campus, AC1 374

Department: Creative Writing
Major Professor: Lynne Barrett