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11.30.2007

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Literary Review

The 12-Foot Teepee book review



"The 12-Foot Teepee"

Author: Marilyn Armstrong

Publisher: A Marilyn Armstrong Enterprise Ordering Information:

[Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (Amazon eStore)

Website: <http://wwwcreatespace.com/3330687> **Contact at:**

5dawgz@earthlink.net

Frank O's book rating: * stars (out of 4 stars)**

"Nevertheless, Armstrong's distinctive pathos in the way her narrative flowingly handles an unredeemable childhood with an adulthood filled with love and longing but continued financial and health-related chaos is indeed a winning account of elusive self-discovery...the results are refreshingly therapeutic."

--Frank Ochieng, World Voice News

Life experiences--past or present--serve as literal landscapes for our livelihoods yet to be determined. We all draw from a previous colorful road map filled with memories of joy and sorrow, convenience and complication, revenge and redemption. New England-based writer Marilyn Armstrong provides the ultimate challenge in presenting her heartfelt memoirs of a nostalgically scarred existence of child abuse in the devastatingly personal

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novel "The 12-Foot Teepee". Armed with candid reflection and a confident sense of healing, professional scribe Armstrong delves into her psyche of personalized horror from yesteryear. The results are refreshingly therapeutic for Armstrong...not to mention the readers that climb into her shell of shock and gradual search for stabilization.

Skillfully, she combines her lingering heartache with a hearty sense of empowerment through the spiritual metaphor of a traditional Native American domicile--the teepee. In short, Armstrong's quest for piecing together this cloth-made sanctuary is analogous to her emotional and psychological placement of her tarnished disillusionment. Granted that there have been convincing horrid stories about being compromised physically and mentally that may carry more weighty sensationalism. Nevertheless, Armstrong's distinctive pathos in the way her narrative flowingly handles an unredeemable childhood with an adulthood filled with love and longing but continued financial and health-related chaos is indeed a winning account of elusive self-discovery. "The 12-Foot Teepee" is daringly insightful, gently witty and undeniably resourceful for those that know the taboo-driven family-oriented abuse all too intimately.

"Teepee" plagued protagonist Maggie has one specific mission in mind--to define the rebirth of her spotty soul of guilt, shame, frustration and increasing self-doubt. Unconventionally, building a teepee in her woody backyard would prove to be the strengthening gesture. Sadly, Maggie and Lucas were the tawdry targets for their despicable father--a sick-minded individual masquerading as a Parental Prince of Breadwinning where putting the food on the table was the main goal while everything else remained on the backburner. These were the questionable days--according to Maggie--where your dysfunctional family's dirty laundry stayed behind closed doors. The 3-D effect of "denial, dysfunction and daddy-oriented domination" was the golden rule of thumb. When daddy felt "uninspired" about mommy's ability to show some amorous affection, his opportunity knocked with a twisted vengeance when recruiting his imprisoned offspring to his forbidden desires.

Clearly, Maggie and the soon-to-be deceased Lucas were fornicating fodder for daddy's demented source for carnal delight. Naturally, this prolonged practice of "making dear daddy a perverted yet happy camper" would breed a damaged disenchantment that would bewilder Maggie beyond recognition. As for Lucas, this unspeakable violation would follow this poor casualty to his gravesite.

Interestingly, Maggie's glaring resentment isn't just reserved for her sordid "touchy-feely" father but the "invisible" mother that seemingly looked the other way and willingly played ignorant to the shady shenanigans that existed. The commonplace defense for Maggie's mother would explain the persistent malaise that befalls many women of that golden age era where silence was a virtue while having an outspoken tongue meant a violation of your fragile life. Predictably, unstable male heads of household would institute that reliable card of intimidation--the treacherous tactic that hinted a hasty death to the bold women or children that even whispered the ominous syllable of their moneymaking tormentor's warped indiscretion. Hence, the blueprint as to why so many victims of physical, sexual or verbal abuse are willing to assume the submissive stance of hopelessness. Maggie and her empty-hearted sibling Lucas would be one in an abundance of outrageous statistics that tell an ugly tale of sleazy inappropriateness behind the facade of Ideal Quaint Suburbia, USA. It's awfully hard to watch

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the contradiction of classic American television fantasy fare such as the picture-perfect portrayals on "Father Knows Best" when your particular father is "doing his best" to get into your pants or lifting your skirt when mommy conveniently decides to vacantly check out emotionally.

Vividly, Armstrong builds a gleeful momentum when chronicling the step-by-step methods that detail the construction of the teepee on a vast property where Maggie and her loved ones are barely holding onto financially. We're instructed to not just dwell on the traumatic pile of distrust and misfortune that came as an intrusive package for Maggie to wear as an unkind albatross around her indelible neck. Thankfully, Armstrong's penchant for tapping into the current-day crisis concerning a lack of solid finances, the inflicting medical woes and the urgency of family unity under stressful times of an expensive and explosive world is thoroughly realistic. This is to shrewdly point out that Armstrong's/Maggie's day-to-day turmoil is as universal and familiar as the next faceless wonder trying to cope with Life's spontaneous tensions. Still, you never get a belaboring dosage of negativity or despair. Armstrong is careful to allow the reader to methodically celebrate in the appreciation of emerging victorious from the numbing humble beginnings to the expectation of salvation through the faith and fortitude. Her symbolic tomb--a cherished cloth bound by wooden sticks that embodies her determination to uphold a belief system of optimism--becomes a clever and keen materialistic marker for a resurrection of promise and peace.

Some may discover a few anecdotal observations that play into realms of manipulative wordplay, some may praise this written tome for its ode to honor, life lessons and a dash of self-deprecation. Whatever your outlook, Armstrong's "The 12-foot Teepee" is a well-meaning declaration for personal growth through the trials and tribulations of tragedy and the yearning for tranquility. As a dependable read, "Teepee" is gloriously involving and provides a cautionary sentiment that is uniquely liberating for its adventurous author as well as the masses that care to engage in this uplifting message of silenced persecution.

Frank Ochieng

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Article by Frank Ochieng

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Frank Ochieng is a graduate of Suffolk University located in the heart of Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts. He holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology. For many years, Frank has been an online film critic for various outlets. He's a member of The Online Film Critics Society (OFCS) and The Internet Entertainers Writers Association (IEWA). Also, Frank had briefly been a film critic/movie columnist for the Massachusetts-based independent urban newspaper The Boston Banner. Furthermore, Frank can occasionally be heard as a regular late night movie panelist/contributor/guest on "The Movie Night" broadcasts on Boston's WBZ Radio 1030 AM on "The Jordan Rich Show" syndicated throughout 38 states and selected provinces in Canada.

Frank Ochieng joined the USAVoice staff in November of 2006. He can be reached via e-mail at: frank.ochieng@usavoice.org

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