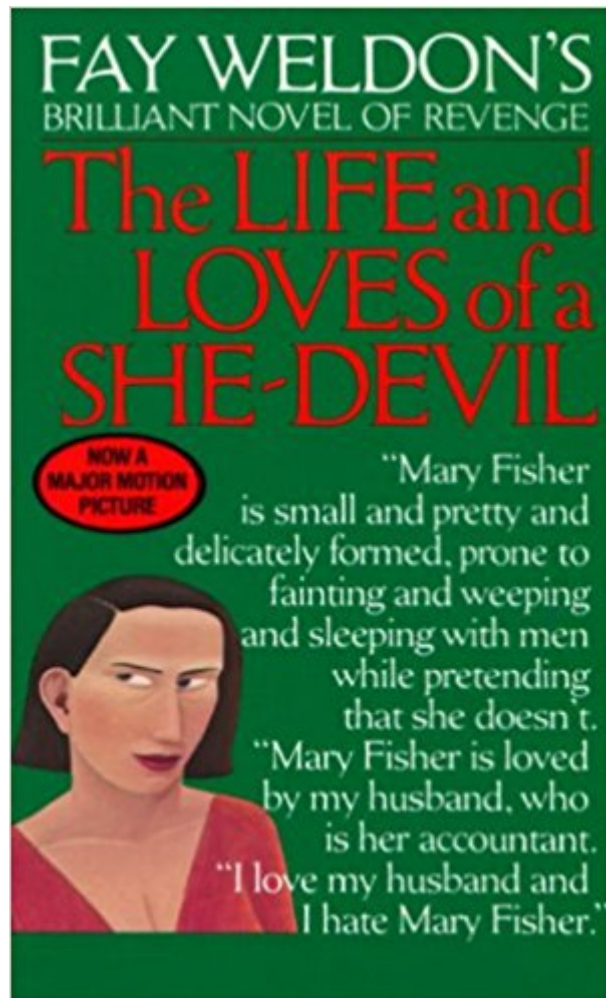


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The Life And Loves Of A She Devil



Synopsis

This is not a book for everyone, but its admirers are vigorously enthusiastic. For example: Rhoda Koenig in New York Magazine, who calls it ". . . a novel of blazingly hot revenge, one that amply illustrates the saying about heaven having no rage like love turned to hate, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." Or Rosalyn Drexler, who said on the front page of The New York Times Book Review, "It affords a scintillating, mindboggling, vicarious thrill for any reader who has ever fantasized dishing out retribution for one wrong or another." Or Carol E. Rinzler, who wrote on The Washington Post Book World's front page, ". . . what makes this a powerfully funny and oddly powerful book is the energy of the language and of the intellect that conceived it, an energy that vibrates off the pages and that makes SHE-DEVIL as exceptional a book in the remembering as in the reading . . . a small, mad masterpiece."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I think too many readers & reviewers have overlooked the sheer scope of Ms. Weldon's attack in this, my favorite novel. More than just a roadmap to the vengeance of one woman against the man and mistress that cause the disintegration of her life, Ruth by the end, becomes the avenging angel of all who have ever felt unwanted by a world consumed with the transient virtues of beauty, taste and wealth. She decimates, with the depraved passion of a Bosch-like demon, all of the "sensible" notions of love, mother-hood, respect for beauty and humanity that society foists upon the less attractive of its people, specifically its women. By the end of this novel her attack broadens beyond

the simply banal cruelties of man and begins to rattle the very gates of heaven itself to force a confrontation with Nature and God. Ruth's gripe is with God and not man, for she sees Him as the real culprit behind the suffering she, and all women, must endure. Her ultimate victory, and the perversity of its coming is summated in the last line of this book (In my opinion, one of the best final lines ever written). One of the sharpest minds writing today, Ms. Weldon brings a lucidity and vigor to her portrait of the modern beauty-obsessed culture, that is by turns biting humor and strangely touching; for all of the bile that she unleashes throughout the novel, Ruth is a character that we can fundamentally claim as one of "our" own. I think that this "our" goes way beyond the small group of feminist women who have had Weldon claimed as one of their own. For me she is the truest torch-bearer for anyone who has ever felt not beautiful, intelligent, graceful or genteel enough to earn respect in our culture. A true masterpiece, this novel is Weldon at her delicious best and is worthy of any comparison to that other great novel of revenge, "Moby Dick". Is Ruth Patchett the modern-day equivalent of Ahab? You decide.

I find this book complete genius and one of the best feminist books I have ever read. Ruth's hideous looks are her husband's excuse for treating her like an animal, and eventually leaving her for an ultra-feminine and successful woman. Ruth can see Mary Fisher's shallow and materialistic success and character, and she knows that they are what society respects the most. Ruth doesn't, and shouldn't accept this cruelty, for she knows that there is no justification for her husband's and society's ways, and she has to get even. Ruth hasn't got anything too lose, she doesn't have any money, respect or public status, therefore she can plan her revenge without any regrets. Ruth's revenge on her unfaithful husband Bobbo is clearly about getting back at society, and it's ridiculous demands of women. Ruth gives up motherhood, love, humanity, and even her own body in order to show the world and Mary Fisher and Bobbo in particular, that beauty, respect and popularity can be achieved by anybody.

"The Life and Loves of a She-Devil" is the second book by Fay Weldon I have read, after "Remember me", which I had reviewed - rather unfavorably. I liked it much more than "Remember me". The novel is about Ruth, an ugly, big woman, a housewife with two children, who is left by her husband Bobbo for a tiny, pretty Mary Fisher, a successful writer of trashy novels. Ruth is devastated, but undergoes a mental transformation and sets off for revenge... All her actions are concentrated on destroying Bobbo's new life (and Mary's, too) and getting him back. The plan requires a lot of effort and suffering, and using other people. Because of all the people involved,

almost each social group is depicted and criticized with precision. The whole story is presented in a convention of a fairy tale (an adult fairy tale!), and thanks to this trick the most absurd actions sound almost plausible. The novel is funny, easy to read, but at the same time tackles serious matters and makes the reader think, sometimes being scary in its frankness (after all, Ruth's plan is not what all the betrayed women do, but it certainly is what many of them want to do). And what more can the reader want?

Ruth's husband, Bobbo, is Mary Fisher's accountant. Mary Fisher is a romance novelist. He is infatuated with her. The narrator knows the financial details of Mary Fisher's life because Bobbo carries the accounts home. There is self-deception and there is wishful thinking. The narrator is not pretty and she is clumsy. The evening Bobbo's parents visit he stays home. He has claimed that he doesn't intend to leave Ruth, he is just in love with Mary Fisher. He does leave Ruth and the two children when the couple quarrels in the presence of Bobbo's parents. Subsequently Ruth, the narrator of some of the chapters, burns her residence and delivers the children to Mary Fisher and Bobbo at Mary Fisher's tower. She masterminds the release of Mary Fisher's mother from her spot in an old people's home. She is the founder of an employment agency and uses it to put people into contact with Bobbo at his accounting firm. She acquires accounting skills and surreptitiously enters his office at night and moves client money in and out of his personal accounts. She becomes the housekeeper and lover of the judge handling his criminal case which results in a long term of incarceration for Bobbo. She connives with plastic surgeons to change her appearance to that of Mary Fisher. This is rollicking good fun. It is droll. It is a nice critique of stereotypical thinking.

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