

Reviews: Sable Shadow and The Presence

Review by 'Kitty Book Lover':

William Peace has done it again. His latest book, *Sable Shadow and The Presence*, which has already won several awards, combines a clever plot with thought provoking discussions on good and evil, the contradictions and complexities of life, and the meaning of relationships. The book is written by the main character, Henry Lawson, in autobiographical form. It is difficult to sustain the first person voice and not have the reader tire of it, but Mr. Peace has managed to make the story interesting, readable, and anything but tiring. We meet Henry's parents, learn about their individual personalities and the way their relationship develops over a long marriage and his very likeable, but different from him, sister, who is also his friend. His grandfather and uncles seem to Henry to be more successful than his father and Henry admires them, while not yet understanding his father or his motivations. As he matures, he grows in his understanding of his mother and his father is able to help them through this crisis in their marriage. We follow Henry through college, his success in business, his marriage to a woman he deeply loves. There are some wonderful vignettes describing the world of office politics and what some people do to get ahead. Everything seems to be going just the way Henry has planned until a tragic fire in a plant in Mexico that he technically supervises results in the deaths of many people. Sentenced to jail in Mexico, his career over, he begins to think about what is really important in life and when he is released, turns his life in a completely different direction.

Mr. Lawson explains in the first chapter what the title means. *Sable Shadow and the Presence* are two voices that Henry begins to hear as a child. Lest you think that Henry is just some closet schizophrenic, that is not the case. These two represent "good" and "evil" and Henry hears them the way we all do when we are making a decision, whether it be a serious moral one, like deciding to have an extra-marital relationship or something more practical like choosing a career. How many of us have felt/heard those voices arguing inside of us, each presenting a different way of looking at the problem.

As in previous books, Mr. Peace explores questions of religion. In *Efraim's Eye and The Iranian Scorpion* he investigated Islam and its tenets. In *Sin and Contrition* different branches of Christianity were examined. In this book he presents the thesis that existentialism is not necessarily in conflict with the beliefs of Christians. Not everyone will agree with him, but he posits some compelling arguments to support his ideas. As in all his previous books, the research is amazing. Many famous authors employ researches. Mr. Peace does all of his own and does a superb job with it.

One of the things I like best about Mr. Peace's writing is that one is able to read on so many different levels. His plots are well thought out and his characters developed nicely. One is anxious to turn the page and find out what will happen next. But when the story is over, one is left thinking about the ideas that have been raised. What are good and evil? What makes success and how do we measure it? What makes something moral and something immoral? It is easy to see why it has won awards.

Review is by Mamta Madhavan for Readers' Favorite:

Sable Shadow & The Presence by William Peace is the fictional autobiography of Henry Lawson who hears two voices from his childhood. These two voices represent good and evil and, like any of us, Henry also hears them while making decisions. The story takes us through Henry's childhood to his college days, to his relationships, to his marriage and his business. Henry suffers a series of tragedies at the peak of his career which sees him attempting suicide. He recovers from that dark phase with the help of his wife and a psychiatrist. It is a story of triumph, tragedy, good, and evil.

The book has many interesting twists and turns in the plot. The author's fascination for existentialism is revealed through Henry Lawson's interest in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. That contributes a lot of wisdom in the discussions that occur in the story. The characters are well developed and they help in making the plot strong and powerful. There are some thought provoking details on good and evil which give readers an opportunity to think more about their individual beliefs and ideas. I found the representation of the good and the bad voices very practical and relatable. Readers can connect to that very easily.

The character of Henry Lawson has many shades which make him an interesting person. The author has captured well the triumph, tragedy, good, evil, sorrows, and happiness of human life that are palpable while reading the book.

Two readers from Reader's Favourite have submitted the following reviews:

Kathryn Bennett: "Sable Shadow & The Presence by William Peace is the fictional autobiography of bright introvert Henry Lawson. He hears strange voices at a young age, voices that he does not recognize and believes one to be the Sable Shadow, who is a confidant of the devil, and the other is The Presence who may be a worker of God. For him life becomes a struggle in a chess game of sorts and these voices follow him from childhood through life until he attempts to kill himself, and must then begin to rebuild himself, making a new identity and essentially a new person.

Some books touch you deeply and some make you think, and some manage to do both within the pages of one book. For me Sable Shadow & The Presence by William Peace did both. It made me think and it touched me. The thoughts that this book manages to provoke about good and evil will certainly make you delve into some interesting discussions with friends and loved ones. Each page for me was like peeling back another layer of the onion to enjoy and read. I picked it up and was not able to set it down until I was finished, and even then I felt like I could read more. What would you do if you had the presence of good and the presence of evil speaking to you for your entire life? While Henry has his issues, I personally may not have come out as well as he did and I am not sure I would be able to rebuild myself even with support after such a hard fall. William Peace gets a thumbs up from this author on an inventive story line that evokes thoughts and emotions - a recommended read. 5 stars"

Ray Simmons: Sable Shadow & The Presence is a thoughtful and illuminating work of fiction by William Peace. The main character is Henry, an observant man, a natural philosopher who goes through life looking for meaning and trying to figure out what lies behind appearances. He also goes through life listening to two opposing voices that may represent good and evil. The voices are subtle and indeed, for a period when he is younger, he's not sure if they aren't from inside himself, but over time he becomes convinced that they are external. We follow Henry as he goes through the major events of his life. During early childhood he confides in his sister Jenny about the voices and it is she who names the sinister voice Sable Shadow. In many ways Henry has a typical American life, if there is such a thing. He takes us through childhood, the teenage years, first love, first tragedy, the college years, and a stint in the Navy. We watch him fall in love and navigate his way through the adult years.

William Peace has created an enduring and thought provoking work in Sable Shadow & The Presence. The novel avoids the exaggerated melodrama found in so many current novels. The writing is clean, crisp, and directly to the point. The characters and situations reflect a modern American life and the musings of Henry mirror questions all educated, thoughtful people have asked at some point in their lives. I give it five stars. There should be more novels of this nature out there. 5 stars"

Review by Peter Skala:

Congratulations Bill! An outstanding achievement! I couldn't put it down, meals no meals, I swallowed the book in two days. Your prose has become self-assured. You dominate it, rather than being dominated by it. The research, as ever is superb, and also completely open to being understood by the layman. . . . You have certainly managed to recreate life as it is lived – even to the pertinent introduction of the meta-physical element – though a bit wobbly in spots, it stands solid, protected by Sartre. . . . I like it and feel close to it – I guess that's one of the reasons why I think it such a remarkable creation. Your progressive development of style, skills and plot makes my mouth water for the goodies to come. Thank you from me, but really from all your readers.