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QCQ#15

QUOTE:

“’You're very lovely,' he says. 'I'm going to invite you to do something reckless.' He touches her again. 'Stay. Spend the night with me.'

Across the rim of the cup she regards him steadily. 'Why?'

`Because you ought to.'

`Why ought I to?'

`Why? Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it.'” (p.8)

COMMENT:

This quote comes when David is trying to get his student to sleep with him. He has invited her over for wine and dinner and though she is young and hesitant, he is her professor and so she goes along with much of it. What struck me about this passage was David’s response to her question of why she should sleep with him. In particular, it was disturbing and sort of predatory; a selfish, misogynistic way of thinking about women and their beauty. Though the much of the book, at least the beginning, is David’s sexual exploitations, his use of power to get students to sleep with him, this line, quite frankly, pissed me off (though I know it’s a novel, etc., it made me dislike all parts of David as a character, whereas previously I had thought he may have some aspects that could be sympathized with). I think that so often, though perhaps less so today, there is the idea that a woman and her beauty are not hers alone but rather for her to share with others, probably men, and often the consequences of such ideations are rape or sexual assault. While David does not end up sleeping with this student, she leaves with obvious discomfort, he does sleep with Melanie, another one of his students and at one point forces himself upon her. Even though she does not resist, she asks him to leave; David’s pattern continues to be disgusting, predatory and as the reader you want him to suffer some type of consequence.

QUESTION:

What is it that makes people think they can share or have part of another?