

“About Shorty” By Martha Gellhorn

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Martha Gellhorn’s fiction “About Shorty” portrays a woman who plays the Hetaira archetype. The feminism and focus on womanization display her as a competitive figure. The seductress character of Shorty in the story reveals her intelligence due to her ability to survive with feminism. The author of the fiction emphasizes the feminine characteristics of the woman, such as her beauty, dress, and giggling. The traits are purely feminine, but the woman uses them for her survival in the competitive world. The element of jealousy apparent in the feelings of the narrator’s voice explains the desire of each woman to receive appreciation. The narrator in the story exhibits envy against Shorty as she attains all appreciation and encouragement due to her beauty. Gellhorn, through the construction of feminism in the story, represents the Hetaira archetype. The feminine characters in the story do not lack independence or freedom, which makes them fit the archetype.

Gellhorn tries to represent the complex realities during the World War when the males used females to overcome depression. The female archetype is apparent in the comment, “I thought I was prettier than Shorty but not as successful. I would not have been able to giggle so enthusiastically at such mediocre jokes. I dislike Shorty for a lot of instant virtuous reasons because I was jealous” (Gellhorn, 120). The author explains how alluring the character has been for the males of the society, uncovering her womanizing power. The inclusion of the word womanly explains that the most powerful tool for females is their beauty. The character of Shorty exhibits the confidence visible in her interactions with the male members. She is also capable of refusing their offers, representing her bravery and independence. The feminine character in the story does not convey the intention of maintaining long-term relationships.

The character of Shorty in the fiction represents her as a Hetaira archetype as she focuses on one-to-one relationships. The archetype is also visible in the statement, “Shorty was classed as one of what Jim Russell named the whores de combat” (Gellhorn 122). The author illustrates that the Russians and French treated women as whores for timely pleasure. The character of Shorty as a whore displays her manipulative role as she uses her feminine powers to attract the males. She receives money for her services, which makes her a perfect model for the identified archetype. The narrator in the story continually speaks about her desire to receive a status equal to Shorty. Her intentions of pleasing men in the same manner and attaining appreciation confirm her role as a hetaira.

The competitive nature of women in the story also displays the female archetype. The author of the fiction highlights the seductive role of females, becoming most visible in the role of Shorty. She mentions in the fiction, “the men gave shorty what she asked for if they had it with affable contempt” (Gellhorn 123). The author transmits the idea that the only tool that women used in the period of war to attain desires was their beauty. Through her seductive role, she managed to gain an advantage over the men who represented her as a seductress. The character of Hetalia is apparent as she

restricts herself to one male but is still capable of maintaining relationships with other males. The comfort of the female character reveals her role as a seducer and professional whore. The feminine power acts more as a psychological vessel than a physical vessel, apparent in the thoughts of the narrator. The narrator in the story spends a lot of time recognizing how she can attain the same appreciation from men. Her desire to receive similar status highlights Gellhorn's intentions of displaying women as seductresses (Gellhorn).

Gellhorn, throughout the story, creates scenes and dialogues that uncover the feminine nature. The competition between the narrator and Shorty appears as they both intend to please males. The fiction depicts that male appreciation means a lot to the females, and they are willing to use their seductive powers to grab their attention. The feminine description of Shorty expresses seductive nature, "her hair grew, and she curled it; she used lipstick and presently mascara. She turned very womanly" (Gellhorn 121). The feminine description confines Shorty's character to the hetaira archetype. The author creates a powerful female character who is well aware of her beauty and uses it as a tool to achieve her dream. The story also highlights the role of Shorty and the narrator as a whore who knows the trick of playing with several males (Gellhorn).

The creation of Shorty in the fiction also displays the less significant male power apparent in her decision to reject their authoritative role. Shorty's strength is apparent in her marriage, as she is strong enough to forget her past and start her new life. She managed to survive with different men, as her first husband was a Jew. Shorty's ability to handle men of different natures also confirms her role as a hetaira. Her commitments and relationships with more than one male represent her as a seductress who knows the trick of keeping them happy. Irrespective of her sexual choice, her main role remains as a confidant to males. Shorty also plays Hetaira as she adds to the challenging positions of the male characters in the story. The male's intentions are to use their power to manipulate feminism.

Work Cited

Gellhorn, Martha. Honeyed Peace. Esquire Inc., 1949.