

Role Of Women in Heart of Darkness

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Introduction

Heart of Darkness is an adventure story in which an author narrates a story on behalf of Marlowe. Marlowe is the main character in the book. He is a sailor and tells stories of his past adventures. He narrates his experiences as to what happened to him as he crossed the African wilds where an elephant bone mining company used to operate. *The author of the novel exposes his main character, Marlow, to a variety of adventures as he (Marlow) passes through the passage, which causes him to encounter the Interior of Africa, where he intends to search for the mysterious Kurtz. However, he also encounters several female characters all along. The novel depicts the perceptions and the behaviours he demonstrates about them, according to his past experiences and the perceptions and conclusions he makes after encountering some other female characters all along. It not only enlightens him about his experiences with women but also enables him to make an analysis of his own (Heart of Darkness, 2018; CliffsNotes, 2018).*

Discussion

This novel focuses basically on Marlow's passage, where he experiences the interior of Africa and investigates Kurtz, who he perceives as mysterious. However, he also finds various female characters in supporting roles. This essay will discuss three concepts that underlie sexism. He doubts the grasp of reality and competency of women, the lack of narrative voice of females and his characterization of women of Africa and Kurtz intended (Study.com, 2018).

Firstly, the aunt of Marlow is the reason for Marlow's voyage in the heart of Africa. She makes him realize the opportunity which he gets when the company appoints him. She makes him understand and convinces him that he has the responsibility to spread the glories of the West and how the people of the West think to the people in the other parts of the world. She conceptualizes Marlow as someone who goes about "weaning those ignorant millions [the Africans] from their horrid ways." She considers him to be a person who shall cause a silver lining in the clouds and shall bring light and reveal the truth to the places which are surrounded by darkness in the world (Heart of Darkness, 2018).

He further elaborates about his aunt as "its queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own" this emotion of his about the women is reflected in the attitude of Marlow, which he portrays towards his aunt and further when he meets the fiancée of Kurtz. The similarity can be seen in the point of view of Kurtz and Marlow about women. As he (Kurtz) states, "We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse." Marlow's perception of women is that they are less grounded inherently, maybe because of his lack of close interaction with females

in his life. He only interacted with his aunt, who treated him with little respect in terms of intelligence. Except for this, he does not have any feminine ties. Thus, the root cause of these stereotypes about the intelligence of women is the lack of familiarity with women. This caused him to make assumptions about women (Heart of Darkness, 2018; Study.com, 2018).

Secondly, Marlow encounters two women, whom he calls knitting women when he arrives at the office of his company. These women used to perform knitting with black wool. He describes them as “one fat and the other slim,”. He further conceptualizes women as “guarding the door of Darkness.” The presence of these two women shows a symbolic meaning. Although very brief, the meeting left an important impression. The women tell about the mythological fates of those who measure, spin, and cut the thread of life. Marlow’s life was measured in the company’s office as a result of his journey in Africa (Heart of Darkness, 2018; Study.com, 2018).

Thirdly, the role of the African mistress of Kurtz cannot be ignored. Although there is not much information about her in the story but “a wild and gorgeous apparition of women,” her presence is very powerful in the novel. Her influence over Kurtz and her aesthetic skills are fascinating, as described by Marlow, and cannot be overlooked. The characteristics she possesses, such as creating fear in the minds of others, which was seen in the discussion executed by a Russian in which he talks about her, reflect them in detail. As she speaks in the story thus, nothing much can be learned from her in the story, and her only sound in the story is a shout, which Marlow hears as he takes Kurtz away on the boat and deserts her on the shore (Heart of Darkness, 2018; Study.com, 2018).

Finally, the fiancé of Kurtz, whom Marlow visits after the death of Kurtz, seems intended. She affirms the point of view that Marlow holds about women and seems to exemplify the statement of Marlow in which he said that women live in their own world. He found her very innocent and extremely naïve about Kurtz. She also has little idea about the activities he does in Africa. The reality which Marlow has witnessed, she has no idea of it. Marlow did not feel right to shatter her illusions. For this reason, in the end, he lies to her and tells her that Kurtz, while passing through the last moments of his life, took his name. He says that telling her the truth “would have been too dark—too dark altogether”. It seemed that Marlow had accepted Kurtz’s idea that women have their own “beautiful world” that must not be sullied. Marlow replaced Kurtz’s final words with others because he might not want to upset Kurtz. This lie to Kurtz’s intended can also be considered as an opportunity for Marlow to change Kurtz’s legacy and later experiment to change his own legacy, which could be ideal as he already had (Heart of Darkness, 2018; Study.com, 2018).

Conclusions

In a nutshell, the purpose and desires of women are never truly written, so further inquiry can be made. The novel presents the sexist approach to women, for instance, they live in their own world, and the female characters do not possess a narrative voice. As Marlow states, “They—the women, I mean—are out of it—should be out of it”, finally, the way novel addresses the influence of women in

the story. For instance, the role of aunt and the role of knitting women and the Kurtz's intended. It seems to be pushed aside from the story's proceedings. However, women do influence their environment, which is evident from the role of Marlow's aunt, African women, and Intended's contributions to Kurtz's actions and mindset. It cannot be overlooked as these roles are not just implications but are influences. Hence, the denial of female influence leads the characters of women in *The Heart of Darkness* to remain just as vague shadow in terms of characterization (Study.com, 2018; Sosland Journal, 2018).

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