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<<British Literature>>

**The Treatment of the Feminist Perspective during the Nineteenth
Century Literature.**

**The Case Study of Feminism in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of
Darkness"**

Presented by:Hafida Adjal

Members of the Jury :

Supervisor : BellalHanane

Chairperson :Bahraoui Sofia

Examiner :Larbi Narimane

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Abstract

Feminism is known as a collection of beliefs and ideologies which appeared to fight against women's oppression. It emerged to erase the unequal and unfair distribution of social, political and economic power between genders aimed at defending equal rights of women. From the middle of the nineteenth century feminism has been defined as the feminist movement to protect women from patriarchal system which gave men much power to dominate women. Writing literature has a great impact and it is positively reflected in imposing the women's position in society. Though the flourish of feminism during the nineteenth century and the great number of activists' works, some writers were still considering woman as an inferior sex. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has many underlying tones about social issues such as racism, sexism and corruption. For this research, the idea of sexism and gender roles in Conrad's writing is discussed. The following work delves into discussing different critic's viewpoints on Conrad's writing demonstrating his intentional displacement and removal of females viewing them in a negative light. The question that is asked is whether the darkness of the Congolese coast and the hard conditions of the colonialism led him to present women this way or it is his own attitude towards women, in the hopes of uncovering pertinent information on Conrad's views about women during the time *Heart of Darkness* was written .

Key Words:

1.Feminism

2.Patriarchal

3.Sexism

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my precious family.

A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving parents, who have always been there for me who gave their all to educate me.

I dedicate it also to my sisters and brothers who have supported me to complete this humble work.

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General Introduction :

The western woman witnessed a struggled movement to improve her position and lifting of social, economic and political level, and this movement reached its peak with the Industrial Revolution that gave the real breakthrough for every contemporary development, which ended the philosophy that degrade the value of women .

Feminism is both intellectual and political movement that gives justice for women to end the racism between genders. There is much different feminism which has the same objective to make women in equal term with men. So, what is feminism and what is its function ?

There have been many feminist movements from the late 19th century which rebelled against the patriarchal those humiliated and depressed women from their position as slaves to serve men.

Feminist theory has emerged to defend the injustice and unfair women in their societies by challenging through efforts to remove and erase preconceived ideas.

As a result, a great number of female writers appeared to support these feminist movements and struggled to declare their rights due to they were aware of their bad situation which made them in torture. Despite of all their sufferance to get their freedom , they continued to fight those who treated them as meaningless human beings.

As in different parts of the world, feminism in Britain seeks to establish social, political, and economic equality for women. The history of this great movement in Britain dates to the

very beginnings of feminism writers and activists such as Virginia Woolf who strives a lot and sacrifices her life to women's issue. She was considered as one of the most important essayist of English literature and the modern feminist criticism.

Yet the most important questions that may be raised in the present research are as follows :

1-Who are the male and female writers who strive against, and what are their main deeds in literature ?

2-How could they reach their purpose through their writings ?

3- what is the role do women play in *Heart of Darkness* and why does it matter?

4- To what extent did colonialism reflect upon presenting women in Josef Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ?

5- How is Conrad's point of view towards women especially in the top of feminism movement flourish during the nineteenth century?

6-Why have females been considered as silent and absent characters ?

Through this research study we are going to further investigate the role of women in Conrad's story in which he considered them as an inferior sex, and the sexist messages that are interrelated to women in his writing. Our aim is to show Conrad's viewpoints interpreted by his protagonist Captain "Charlie Marlow" in his masterpiece "Heart of Darkness", and the main reasons that made him holding these viewpoints.

Chapter One: The Emergence of Feminism in History

1.1 Introduction :

Women's history is always interrelated with contemporary feminist politics and social changes . Women turned to history when they sought to question inequalities in their lives in order to understand and know more about the roots of their oppression and how much did they suffer from discrimination and injustice and learn from the challenges and the struggles of the activist feminists and their great deeds to improve the position of woman. As in other countries, feminism in Britain seeks to establish political, social, and economic equality for women .The history of feminism in Britain dates to the very beginning of feminism itself .In this chapter , we introduce some information about feminism in order to make a clear understanding about the woman question and how they fought to get their rights and freedom from the gossipy and racial prejudice which gave the property to men . We begin with the definition of feminism, furthermore, feminism during the Victorian era , some activist feminists and their main works. In addition, we are going to deal with the main feminist theories.

1.2 Definition of Feminism

Feminism is defined as the relationship between gender and power or the equality between the man and the women . It is a concept that strived for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and female subordination within and society .So, it emerged to erase the unequal and unfair distribution of political , social and economic power between the genders and protested the idea that women have no right as man .

The Oxford English dictionary reveals that the first appearance of the word feminism was in 1894 which means a person whose beliefs and behaviours are based on feminism .

The word feminism appeared in 1895 in the National Organization of Women which is a theory that believes that women must be granted some special privileges .

[Feminist movements](#) have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to [vote](#), to hold public office, [to work](#), to earn fair [wages](#) or [equal pay](#), to [own property](#), [to receive education](#), to enter contracts, to have equal rights within [marriage](#), and to have [maternity leave](#). Feminists have also worked to promote bodily [autonomy](#) and [integrity](#), and to protect women and girls from [rape](#), [sexual harassment](#), and [domestic violence](#).

Nowadays Feminism is seen as a fight against misogynist beliefs derived from sex, based prejudices notably gender roles while patriarchists assert that gender roles are innate and state the prevalence of unchangeable and universal differences between women and men in order to undermine and marginalize women. The goal of feminism is , thus the liberation of women being oppressed on the basis of gender ; and living within this reality is a permanent challenge. (Bedjaoui, F 2005).

This quote means that Feminism appeared to fight people who hate women as a gender and they made a universal difference between man and woman . So, the aim of Feminism is to give liberty to those women despite of all the critical contexts. Those who claimed for Feminism declared some characteristics which put the emergence of women in their societies as citizens in all the fields, social, political and economic, women was raised and educated exactly like men . Woman would work under the same conditions and for the same salaries ; erotic freedom would be accepted by custom , but the sexual act would no longer be considered a remunerable ‘service’

Women would be obliged to provide another livelihood for themselves ; marriage would be based on free engagement that the spouses could break when they wanted to motherhood would freely chosen. That is, birth control and abortion would be allowed.

’No one shall be subject torture or cruel in human or degrading treatment or punishment’

The Universal Declaration (UD) States 1948

This formulation provides a vocabulary for woman to define and articulate experiences of violence such as rape sexual terrorism. So, this quotation means that this state is a responsible for such violence which touches woman’s rights .

The British journalist Rebecca West stated that women are human beings too as men are, she wanted to achieve equality of the sexes and to put an end to women exclusion from all the domains of life, Rebecca just wanted woman to be considered as humans, her views based on the support of women against injustice , women’s inferior position in society, the inability to attain knowledge and to expose their artistic abilities , she has simply considered feminism as : ‘Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.’

(Rebecca West, 1913 p : 219)

“Feminism is a struggle against sexist oppression . Therefore it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self development of people can take precedence over imperialist, economic expansion and material desires.”

(Bell Hooks,2000 : 26)

Bell Hooks, in his turn, considered feminism to be a kind of conflict aimed at defending equal rights for women, equal opportunities in different disciplines as in employment, in politics , in society as a whole .

Barbara Smith in 1981 saw feminism as a collection of beliefs, ideologies, movements and actions done to free all women : old women, working class women, homosexual women, poor women. Whereas Jone Johnson Lewis, in 2001, believed that feminism requires a movement and actions made by groups of individuals sharing the same attitude and cause to include changes in the behaviours inside and outside the movement.

Women would be obliged to provide another livelihood for themselves ; marriage would be based on free engagement that the spouses can break when they wanted to motherhood would freely chosen. That is , birth control and abortion would be allowed .

“No one shall be subject torture or cruel in human or degrading treatment of punishment”

The Universal Declaration (UD) States 1948.

West also claims that women lived with bad conditions; they were treated as servants from their societies, they suffered a lot from their marginalisation.

“I myself have never been able to find out precisely what Feminism is

I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a door mate or prostitute.” (Rebecca West, 1913 : 212)

In the 19th century, Reformation in the world and especially in Europe allowed more women to declare their rights as citizens in their societies because they became conscious of their deplorable conditions. They started to make manifestations which involved the equality between sexes .

The first article of declaration of the rights of men proclaimed that “ Men are born free and remain equal in rights”.

The first article of declaration of the rights of women replied “ Women are born free and remain equal to men in rights.....”.

So , the term Feminism is known also as women rights which first appeared in France in the 1880's then , Great Britain in 1890 , and finally in the United States in 1910.

[Feminist movements](#) have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to [vote](#), to hold public office, [to work](#), to earn fair [wages](#) or [equal pay](#), to [own property](#), [to receive education](#), to enter contracts, to have equal rights within [marriage](#), and to have [maternity leave](#). Feminists have also worked to promote bodily [autonomy](#) and [integrity](#), and to protect women and girls from [rape](#), [sexual harassment](#), and [domestic violence](#).

1.3Feminism in History

During the nineteenth century, Feminist movement was abound across Europe .Many feminist activists struggled for women's rights in all aspects of society political, social, cultural, and economic .They defended many valuable concepts including the promotion of equality in marriage, parenting as well as attaining property rightsfor these women were of a

particular concern in the beginning of the century. They were two different sectors. Some feminists focused on gaining political power through suffrage movements while others defended women's sexual and reproductive rights.

At the end of the century, women tried more to advance the feminist movement despite that there were threatened to be executed.

1.3.1 Feminism in the Victorian Era

During the Victorian era; women's place was at home, as domesticity and motherhood were sufficient emotional fulfillment for females in society, this constructs kept women far away from the public sphere, but during the 19th century, organisations, associations in addition to charitable missions began to extend the female role of service. Victorian feminism emerged as a potent political force.

Industrial Revolution played a central role in the improvement of women's position in which they were to be idealised in Victorian times. Plenty kinds of new jobs and new kinds of urban living prompted a change in the ways in which men and women roles were perceived. In other way, the notion of separate spheres at home, man in the public sphere of business, politics and sociability, came to influence the choices and experiences of all women at home, at work, in the street.

The Victorian era (1837-1901) is considered as a domestic age, in which Queen Victoria represented a kind of femininity which was centered on some concepts such as family, motherhood and respectability. With the support of her beloved husband Albert and surrounded by her many children, Victoria became an icon of the 19th century middle class femininity and domesticity. The Queen was a symbol of marital stability and domestic virtue. She was considered as 'the mother of the nation' and embodied the idea that the home is the cosy place, and domestic space for women. After the death of her husband Albert 1861, she preferred to interfere in public political engagements.

1.3.2 Women Improvement from Domestic House Makers to Harch Demanders of Gender Equality

Women in several societies were centered on home ,family ,motherhood and respectability .The British woman was not an exception .’’Angel in the House’’ was a popular expression that can be the best example about women as a house maker in the Victorian Era .

‘’The woman as expected to be devoted to her husband and submitted to him. The angel had the following characteristics : passive, powerless, meek, charming, graceful with her dresses, sympathetic, self sacrificing, pious and above all, pure.’’(Brigitte Remy – Hebert, 4)

Women in the Victorian Age were to be under their male dominance either husbands or fathers. The quotation above was said of a time when queen Victoria herself lived in a domestic life devoting her time to prince Albert . The common ideology of that period dictates that the house is the proper place where respectable women should be .Women were characterized to be physicaly weak, and have superiority in the domestic sphere rather than the public one .Women started asking about their place in society and in politics also. That is what Queen Victoria called ‘’the Woman Question’’

The Woman Question was a debate upon the every day life of women, their limited education , their property rights , and the soocial injustice they lived in . It was the age when married women, and in law , have no rights, no vote, and no equivalent rights as compared with single and widowed women who can own property, run bussiness, and earn money . No body could ignore the exclusion of woman from the world . By the early 19th century , however , a wind of change seemed to touch women particularly, to make them aware about the miserable status society decided to put them in. It was a philosophicaland a political movement made by thinkers and some intellectuals who felt this gender discrimination in society and had tried to put that issue into question and to make people aware about the

current dilemma society was witnessing in silence . It was feminism which opened the door to females to be considered as humans having rights to ask for .

1.4Feminst Waves

Feminist movement appeared to declare the right of women as human being and to give back their consideration around the world without exception .

These movements began to assert and argue the truth of women through three waves, each wave dealt with different aspects of the same Feminist issue . The first wave contained women's suffrage prompting women to vote , the second wave was associated wit the women's liberation movement,it defended for the legal and social equality and the last wave is a response of the second wave's failure.

1.4.1The First Wave

The first wave Feminism was a period of activity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United Kingdom and United States ; it focused on the promotion of equal contract marriage, parenting,,and property rights for women .By the end of the nineteenth century this wave promoted and stimulated women's right to vote as citizens. The term suffrage was considered as a symbol of fighting the economic, cultural inequalities for women.Some writers were associative with the declaration of the first wave such as Verginia Woolf in her book ‘‘A Room of One's Own’’, she says :

‘‘describes how men socially and psychically dominate women’’ which means that men always have the authority to dominate over women.

Women's suffrage was achieved in Britain by passing the representation of the people act in 1918. This was granting the vote to women over the age of 30. In 1928, the right to vote was given to all women over the age of twenty.

The emergence of the leaders in the United States such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony which was complaining for the abolition of slavery were associated to women's right to vote.

1.4.2 The Second Wave

The term second wave used first by " Marsh Lear " in 1968's to describe the emergence of women's political movements in the 1960's till the Tale of 1990's.

The second wave fought social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities. It encouraged women to understand aspect of their personal lives as deeply politicized as reflecting sex's power structure. There were some pro-feminist leaders who supported this wave such as "Betty Friedan" in her famous book "The Feminine Mystique" which debates about women's roles and in time was recognized as one of the central works of the modern women's movement . According to Friedan , women have been encouraged to confine themselves to the narrow roles of house wife and mother and describe of their education as she says "The problem that has no name " .

The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Political" which become synonymous with the second wave. Although the first wave was concerned only about specific women's rights such as suffrage, the second wave was concerned deeply in other issues of equality such as the end of discrimination.

1.4.3 The Third Wave

The third wave Feminism began in the early of 1990's arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave which only emphasized on the middle class white and neglected the black one ,they did not realize the equality .Thus,this wave was the backlash against racism .It distinguished itself from the second wave's issues of sexuality, celebrating it as a means of female improvement, challenging female heterosexuality. It focused on

politics, gender and sexuality aiming to achieve the equality without taking race, class, and nationality into consideration.

Some black feminist leaders such as Gloria Anzaldua, Bell Hooks, Shela Sandoval and others sought to negotiate for consideration of racism, it contains internal debates between those who believed that there are important differences between sexes and those who did not believe so, and contend that gender roles are due to social conditioning.

One can notice that the third wave is a collective voice which criticized the second wave feminism for its lack of attention to the race, gender and religion .

1.5 Leaders of the 19th Century Feminist Movement

The idea of gender, sex discrimination and the lower status of women in society seldom arose does not draw a new debatable issue , it dates back to decades if not centuries before it was a matter which stimulated philosophers as John Stuart Mill and others who by their turn stimulated society in general and women in particular upon their social ; and political status .

1.5.1 John Stuart Mill 1869

John Stuart Mill was a Britain philosopher who was among the pioneers to defend woman rights .He advocated for equality through his work .In 1869 ,he published ‘‘the Subjection of Women.’’ He sided with woman through an argumentation in favour to the social, economic and political emancipation of women as individuals having rights and interests and relying on that ground , he presented a petition in the Parliament calling for the inclusion of women in suffrage in the Reform Act in 1867, but it was not yet successful demands for a secondary higher education and to a hot debate upon ‘‘Women Question’’ .

1.5.2 Mary Wollstonecraft :

She was one of the most activist feminists in the late nineteenth century , she defended for women’s rights and interests in all fields . Wallstonecraft put woman status under discussion ,

she was the first feminist , named ‘‘the mother of feminism’’. She fought to improve woman’s lives . Plenty of work was done ; she published ‘‘Vindication of the Rights of Women’’ in 1792 in which she revolted against the exclusion of French women for citizen rights , she ridiculed the prevalence of the ideologies which considered woman as foolish , meek ,and pious . She believed that education is necessary for woman since they hold the responsibility of educating their children .Her ideas took more that a century before they were put in effect .

Wollstonecraft openly stated that both men and women have the potential to conduct themselves as reasonable and rational human beings. One sex did not have dominance over the other. Wollstonecraft also attacked earlier writers, especially John Milton and Rosseau, for advocating the subordinate position of women in a man’s life. With *Vindication*’s release, new doors opened for women writers.

1.5.3 William Thompson 1825

He was considered to be the champion of women rights . He published ‘‘An Appeal to One Half of the Human Rights ,Women, against the Pretences of the Other Half Men to Retain them in Political and Thences in Civil and Domestic Slavery’’ in 1825 .Thompson , in his book ,denunciated women oppression and the superiority of fathers and husbands over their daughters and wives , whose were seen as a means of reproduction and fertility , women who were

considered to be subjects and properties of men .Thompson’s text was the first manifesto of women rights and poitical equality .

(Biriggite – Remy Herbert, First Women's Movement - suffragists Struggle in the 19th and the Early 20th Century,3 ,)

1.5.4 Fredrick Engels 1884

Fredrick Engels related to the status of women to the economic systems. He notably emphasised on the shift from feudalism to the private ownership of lands in which people who did not own lands are approximately enslaved by the lands owners and that created a need for waged labours who were men only . Engels related the women subordination to social relations rather than the biological disposition, for instance, he analysed women faculties as : virginity , purity , the submission to the husbands are the results of the treatment of property ownersto their labours . Women were considered to be a property possessed by men , so gender oppretion was originated from class-oppression , and the relationship between ,men and women are similar to the relationship between the land owners and the labours .

1.5.5 Karl Marx 1859

Karl Marx believed that the economic system shaped society as a whole . He argued that women oppression was originated from capitalism where the existence of several social classes are planned by the ruling class in order to create class conflicts, and to remain in power. He focused on the investigation of the ways in which women are oppressed through a system of capitalism and private property .In 1859 ‘‘the Origin of the Family Private Property and the State’’Marx recognized the relationship between the capitalism and the oppression.

According to him, there are two different types of labors : productive, in which the worker provides a service in return for monatery wage. The second type is reproductive , a work that any individual does for himself not done in return for wages as cooking or cleaning.

According to him, women are assigned to the reproductive ‘‘domestic’’ sphere where the labors are uncompensated and unrecognized . Marx argues that the exclusion of women from the productive sphere led to male dominance and control in both private and public spheres .

1.6 The Feminist Theory

Women and after all what they witnessed and suffered from during decades and centuries as gender racism, sex oppression and inequality, they started asking for their rights, their existence, and their status in society. They wanted to show to the world that they are suffering from the social, religious and political domination of men and to make people aware about their dissatisfaction about their position and life conditions and this by creating a theoretical and philosophical discourse and debate which is called "Feminism Theory".

This theory is the extension of Feminism in which it defends the elimination of the injustice and racism towards women by challenging through efforts to remove and erase preconceived ideas. Feminism was first coined in a French medical text to draw a description about the surcease of the evolution of the sexual organs and features in male patients suffering from the feminization of their bodies. The concept of feminism was used by the French writer Alexandre Dumas Fils in his booklet intitled "L'Homme-Femme" published in 1872, to mark women behaving in a masculine way and also express the image of women who have male physical characteristics as: body hair, deep voice, muscles bulk.

Analysing all what was said on the issue of feminism, one can understand that feminism sought to erase differences of race, ethnicity and namely gender discrimination and how women can contribute in the different levels of society. Relying on the basis of principles, beliefs, and contributions, several varieties and types of feminism existed.

Liberal Feminism: its main emphasis is gender equality, men and women are equal human beings thus they should have equal opportunities and rights, women should have access to equal pay, economic independence, equal pay and freedom of choice. It claims to remove barriers and rules that prevent equality.

Marxist Feminists : in reference to the theories and writing of both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ; who related women oppression to economic system ;namely Capitalism. They related economic factors to social changes .

Radical Feminism : this rejected the radical idea of men power through historical evolution.This theory believed that pregnancy and reproduction limits women's contributed to society.They also believed that women had to compass femininity simply because it is better than masculinity.Radical feminism thought originated in the US in 1960s and became a recognized feminist theory by the 1970s, it asserts that women are the first oppressed gender and it emphasized that male domination is the basic from of human oppression .

Cultural Feminism : it praises positive aspects of women as nonviolence , emotional , care....It seeks to expose female qualities .

Socialist Feminism : it compaigned for women and consider their inferior position in society relays behind the economic dependence of women upontheir males ,it believes that the role of woman in technology is equal to man since they have the same level

Eco-Feminism : or ecological feminism,it related feminism to environment and those who oppress women as those who harm environment .

1.7Conclusion

Women's rights is a term widely refering to what we would call feminism, we use it to describe earlier women's rights activists, who included both sexes male and female defended the equality for women in public institutions such as government , organization and in the family , the equality of sexes was the main issue . Femnist ideas dealt with social, intellectual, political and cultural transformation in Europe where feminists insisted that women were born equal to men .Their inequality was a social construction, they insisted which could be

reversed by providing girls with education and equal training to boys, and women with employment equal to men.

In this chapter, we have spoken about Feminism that we hope to be sufficient in presenting the main claims of this movement provided by its roots in the history and how did the activists challenged the authority of their society, and we have mentioned also the main feminist theories that emerged during that period.

Chapter Two: Feminism in Literature

2.1 Introduction

Literature of any culture represents the experiences of individuals living at a particular period of time and recording their interactions with the conditions around them. Fiction, poetry, and drama are valued for promoting the impression of authenticity dealing with the common challenges of human experience, especially the search for emotional fulfilment. For middle-class women of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, writing fiction and poetry had a liberating impact. Literature was a place where women could explore the intimate details of their emotions and social interactions, imagining new relationships and life choices, and protesting against the injustice and racism they lived in. They could express themselves freely without limits, however, was another matter, as was the opportunity to make a lasting difference to the multiple difficulties women faced, both in terms of their private domestic lives and their limited opportunities to work outside the home. In this chapter, we are going to make a clear understanding about how did women protest against the injustice, then we will move to the major feminist female writers during the nineteenth century such as Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen and their most famous novels, and we are going to present male writers such as George Moore and D.H. Lawrence, and show how did they support women despite their different sex in order not to say that Conrad had this racist viewpoint just because he is a man no more.

2.2 Feminist Writers

Great writers were inspired by feminist perspective, female writers tried to adhere to male values, writing as men and challenging men. Modern critical analysis of the nineteenth-century women's literature seeks to understand the reasons that women authors, especially in America, Britain, and France, those who their writings spread widely in an age known for its patriarchal and often dismissive attitude toward the intellectual abilities of women. In addition, scholars have examined the broad thematic concerns that characterize the literary works of the nineteenth-century women writers, many arguing that it was in the nineteenth century that gender-consciousness and feminist attitudes first came to the forefront of the literary imagination, changing forever how the works of female authors would be written and regarded.

A huge number of female authors was greater in the nineteenth century than in any preceding century. Women's access to higher education increased exponentially during the century, providing them with skills that they could use to develop their art. The growth of market economies, cities, and life expectancies changed how women in Europe and the United States were expected to conform to new societal pressures, and made many women more conscious of their imposed social, legal, and political inequality. Finally, the many social reform movements led by the nineteenth-century women, such as religious revivalism, abolitionism, temperance, and suffrage, gave women writers a context, an audience, and a forum in which they could express their views. While most scholars agree that many women writers expressly or tacitly accepted the separate sphere of domesticity that the age assumed of them, they also argue that as the century progressed, an increasing number of women began to express, in their writing, their dissatisfaction with gender relations and the plight of women in general. Throughout the Victorian era, the "woman question" regarding woman's true place in art and

society was a subject that was hotly debated, spurred in a large part by the rapid rise in literature by and for women.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, women writers were largely confined to the genres of children's literature and poetry. The emotionalism of poetry, particularly poetry in which depth of feeling and sentiment, morality, and intuition were expressed and celebrated, was considered a "feminine genre," suitable for women writers. As nineteenth-century women increasingly began to write fiction, however, critical reviews of the age often derided the inferior talents of women novelists, faulting what they perceived as women's lack of worldly experience, critical judgment, and rationality—traits thought to characterize men—and dismissing their works as little better than they designed to appeal to the unrefined tastes of an ever-expanding female readership. Many of the century's greatest novelists, including Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Mary Shelley, and George Sand, never completely escaped the condescension of critics whose negative assessments of their works were often based on the author's gender. Scholars argue that the legacy of this sexism has been a historic dismissal of the work of many of the age's most popular, gifted, and influential women writers, consistently judged as unworthy of academic study.

Toward the end of the century, the nineteenth-century, women writers expanded their subject matter, moving beyond highlighting the lives and hardships suffered by women locked in domestic prisons. Instead, they increasingly expressed their individualism and demanded more equal partnerships—in marriage, public life, law, and politics—with men

2.3 Some Feminist Writers

2.3.1 Feminism in Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own"

Virginia Woolf was an ambitious and a prolific author who wrote not only novels but also non-fiction books. Woolf, in fact, wrote so many groundbreaking, best-selling books that it is often difficult for critics and fans to determine which is her best book. In her writings,

Virginia tackles many feminist issues and she was against the domination of men .One of her best feminist writings ‘‘A Room of One’s Own’’

Room of One’s Own 1920s Feminist Utopias is an extended essay , first published on October 24, 1929.It is based on two lectures titled’’ Women and Fiction’’ that Verginia Woolf gave at two women’s colleges Newnham and Girton College At Cambridge University. The essay is generally seen as a feminist text , and it is noted in its argument for both a literal and figural space for women writers within a literary tradition dominated by men. Angry about her own lack of education and limited personal freedom Verginia tackles many feminism issues in the text such as women’s lack of access to education as well as their economic and social dependence on men .Virginia argues that in order for women to write fiction ‘‘A woman must have money and a room of her own.....’’

Virginia inspired for a private space and independence for the uneducated women who would write fiction was echoed in Jipping Street (1928). It is a fictional autobiography of the working class Cathleen Woodward and other women .It tackles the reason of the emergence of the room in the twenties which represents a transitional space , and the political effects of feminism during that period such as post –suffrage feminism,showing that the working class women ‘s experience was not just observed but listened to written down and published, in contrast women in the legal and economic position were very slow and inactive. Woolf’s fictional autobiography diatribes against poverty, and laments for woman’s wasted lives .

One of Virginia’s most famous quotes ‘‘One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well’’In a section discussing the low quality food served at women’s colleges, which she wrote after eating an unsatisfactory dinner of beef and prunes during her visit to Newnham College.

The ultimate moment in the book when Elizabeth is truly emerged as a feminist is when Elizabeth is described as having a sporty demeanour by Georgiana. "Georgiana had the

highest opinion in the world of Elizabeth; though at first she often listened with astonishment bordering on an alarm at her lively, sportive manner of talking to her brother" (Virginia Woolf, 333)

In this novel Woolf, imagines the fate of Shakespeare 's equally brilliant sister Judith. Unable to gain access to the all male stage of Elizabethan England, or to obtain formal education , Judith was forced to marry and abandon her literary gifts or if she had chosen to run away from home , she will be driven to prostitution . Woolf traces the rise of women writers such as Jane Austin, the Brontes and George Eliot .

Virginia Woolf concludes that the great female authors 'wrote as women write , not as men write.' so, she raises the possibility of a specifically feminine style at the same time she emphasizes that the greatest writers are able to see the world equally from a man's and a woman's perspective .Another charge often leveled at Virginia is that her language and style are too challenging for most readers, but according to Virginia's nephew and biographer, Quentin Bell, *A Room of One's Own* is one her more accessible works :

"It is, I think, the easiest of Virginia's books, by which I mean it puts no great burden on the sensibilities. The whole work is held together, not as in her other works by a thread of feeling, but by a thread of argument – a simple well-stated argument: the disabilities of women are social and economic; the woman writer can only survive despite great difficulties, and despite the prejudice

and the economic selfishness of men; and the key to emancipation is to be found in the door of a room which a woman may call her own and which she can inhabit with the same freedom and independence as her brothers. The lack of this economic freedom breeds resentment, the noisy assertive resentment of the male, who insists on claiming his superiority, and the shrill nagging resentment of the female who clamours for her rights. Both produce bad literature, for literature- fiction, that is- demands a comprehensive sympathy which transcends and

comprehends the feelings of both sexes. The great artists is Androgynous... This argument is developed easily and conversationally, striking home in some memorable passages but always lightly and amusingly expressed... For in *A Room of One's Own* one hears Virginia speaking. In her novels she is thinking. In her critical works one can sometimes hear her voice, but it is always a little formal, a little editorial. In *A Room of One's Own* she gets very close to her conversational style.”

2.3.2 Feminism in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* centers on the social norms of the nineteenth century when it was a patriarchal society dominated by men held social and economic power. The novel focused on the mixture of bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. Interested in securing a marriage which was the key theme of the novel of a long century, which records a questioning of society's assumptions about the appropriateness and the availability of marriage; especially for middle class women. Austen explored the frustrations and limitations of marriage of her protagonist. She dramatized her heroine's struggle to find a place in the conservative and social institution of marriage. Elizabeth Bennet emerges as a feminist character.

Jane Austen criticizes gender injustice in the English society during the early nineteenth century. *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrates how money does. Charlotte needs to marry men they are not in love with, but just for gaining financial security. The entailment of Mr Bennet's estate leaves his daughters in poor financial situation which both forces them to marry in difficult and hard situations. It is obviously that Austen believes that women are as intelligent and capable as men and considers their domination status in society is unfair. Austen advises her friends only to marry for love in her personal letter. By her novel she wants to show how the protagonist Elizabeth is able to be happy by refusing to marry for their need for money because she deserves a man who truly loves her and esteems her.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh visits Elizabeth's home, she confronts Elizabeth about her relationship with Mr.Darcy, Elizabeth says to Lady Bourgh "he is a gentleman ;I am a gentleman's daughter ;so far we are equal"(Jane Austin, 306) It is the first time in the novel in which Elizabeth is portrayed as a feminist character. Feminism equates women and men equal, and when Elizabeth considered herself equal to Mr.Darcy is when she emerges as a feminist subtly hinted in the previous chapters. In the first part of the book, Elizabeth appeared as an outspoken character with many opinions to express and unafraid of being suppressed by those around her, she never equates herself with men before, unlike Charlotte Lucas did when she married Mr.Collins with intentions of living a comfortable life .Charlotte can be seen as a feminist instead of Elizabeth in the first chapters of the book because of her ability to make firm decisions for herself without waiting for her husband when she wants or needs. Charlotte says "I ask only a comfortable home ;and considering Mr.Collins character , connections and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering a marriage state"(Jane Austin, 109)

Elizabeth, during these first many chapters was much like a carefree and witty young lady, however by making such a strong statement against Lady de Bourgh, she has truly rose above that rank to a feminist woman. Equating herself with a man and that too of a much higher status than herself shows that she has not only grown as a feminist but also in the way that she has become comfortable with herself as who she is that she will not take criticism from anyone.

The earliest readers of *Pride And Prejudice* were surprised that such a clever book could have been written by a woman. It is, of course, the book from which Austen's most famous line comes: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Playwright Richard Sheridan advised a friend to "buy it immediately" as it "was one of the cleverest things" he had ever read – high praise from a man of the Regency period. Austen seemed to know too much about everyone's follies and

was so worldly that nothing shocked her. It's a form of knowing satire that has become a national trait: deliver your cynicism with a polite smile, keeping the tone 'light, bright and sparkling', as Austen herself aimed to do.

The feminist view found in *Pride and Prejudice* is well-supported in literary criticism yet little discussion has focused on Elizabeth's feminism as seen in the prominent contrast to her female foils within the novel, namely Caroline, Jane, and Charlotte. Each of these women conforms to the socially imposed gender norms of Regency England, while Elizabeth artfully challenges gender inequality. As other women adapt their views to increase their chances of marriage, Elizabeth persistently refuses to capitulate. Defying traditional gender norms, Elizabeth affirms her feminist perspective by helping to shape Mr. Darcy's moral character to match her own. Elizabeth inspires Mr. Darcy to set aside the pride he has in his high station in society in order to win her affections and take her hand in marriage. I argue that Elizabeth's character is not feminist in isolation, but is understood only in contrast to Caroline, Jane, and Charlotte. This claim is supported by an in-depth comparison of Elizabeth and each of the female foils.

The Chapters 13-14 serve to introduce the reader to the character of Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is a supercilious man with exaggerated and overly formal manners and a strange combination of importance and obsequiousness. Mr. Collins is in line to inherit Longbourn. Mrs. Bennet sees the great injustice for which Mr. Collins is responsible, but Jane and Elizabeth to the fact they have no control over the inheritance laws and that Mr. Collins is not in fault of being inherit their father's property. Austen promotes the idea that women's decisions and choices are equally important to men's. Both Mr Collins' and Mr Darcy's proposals to Elizabeth fail due to their misunderstanding of her feelings of self-respect. Elizabeth could not respect herself if she married Mr Collins. Austen uses this situation in the novel to call attention to the difficulties which women faced in the 19th century England. Austen's critical attitude toward

the limitation which the society placed upon women is emphasized in her choice of a character .

Austen was one of the first feminist authors who suggested that women deserve to marry for love, not for increasing social standing or money. She gave to female characters the right to live in happiness which people take for granted now, but in Regency England was not given .Her novel deals with the choices involved in being a woman, she refuses to discriminate between characters on grounds of gender .

2.3.3Feminism in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

Without a doubt, Charlotte Brontë was progressive in her thoughts. In a time when women were considered little more than social adornment and bearers of offspring, Charlotte Brontë bravely contradicted society through her writing. Her novels speak volumes for the oppressed woman; thus Charlotte was considered as one of the first modern women of her time. To refer to Charlotte Brontë as a feminist would, however, be an insufferable misrepresentation,,her standard of living epitomized the nineteenth-century feminist, Charlotte Brontë withdrew from a society that would not entirely accept her, and expressed her stifled ideals through her words. Slight in size, perpetually modest, it was Brontës suppressed spirit that gave a way to her literary fantasies. She often likened herself to others in her oppressed situation; the ugly daughter or poor spinster, which she equated to slaves imprisoned by circumstances beyond their control.

The options for the proper yet impoverished woman during the time were limited a governess or teacher, roles Charlotte Brontë considered forms of bondage, as well. She believed that a governess had no existence, and was not considered a living or rational being except in

connection with the & duties she was forced to perform (Gilbert and Gubar, 347-51).

Marriage was always a viable solution, yet Charlotte Brontë would only marry a man she respected, no matter his status or fortune. She resigned to live in the role society placed upon her, yet no one, not even a stringent society could hamper her burgeoning emotions. It was through her words that Charlotte Brontë created a woman of free thought, intellectual, and a strong moral character; the same traits Charlotte herself possessed.

It was a dreary existence on the Yorkshire moors for the Brontë children. Charlotte was an intelligent youth, who took an early interest in politics. Her interest, solely on her own accord, was self-taught by reading the newspapers her father left lying about. By the age of nine, she knew more about politics than most grown men.

There is no doubt that Jane Eyre in fact is a very feminist novel, thus it thought as relevant to today's woman, those who feel they are discriminated against because of their gender, little opportunity is given to women at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many of these women felt uncomfortable when they wanted to enter many fields in society. It seemed obviously in their work, marriage and family, the absence of educational opportunities and their alienation from all fields of life such as work which promotes them by power to face all the troubles, either to become housewives or governess. With a pursuit of respect, class and security, one can feel that a passionate intelligent and a young woman in Charlotte Brontë's novel, her protagonist Jane Eyre who is capable and should deserve more respect and giving her more importance and value. However, the insecurity that Jane lives in being tossed around with complete disregard for her feelings is one of the grueling characteristics of this occupation. For Jane, becoming a governess seemed the only reasonable way for her to emerge in society.

In the Victorian Era, women were considered as the first group who made battle for the equality of sexes. Feminism was not spoken at that time, rather expressed through. Many

literary works such as novels , stories and even poetry written are considered as means of communication and make the society aware about women's hard condition as a whole and to women to defend their rights and stop keeping silent in particular .Jane Eyre has a feminist tendency and Charlotte Bronte used in order to prove the equality of men and women.Many quotations in the novel focus upon this point .

“Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automation?-a machine without feelings? and can you bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soul and heartless? You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, – and full as much heart ... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, as we are!”(Charlotte Brontë, 41)

This quotation explicitly portrays Brontë's attempt to raise the issue of sexual equality. Jane is fighting for her individuality in this quote, and refuses to be reduced to some mere “machine”.

2.4 Male Writers :

2.4.1 Feminism in The Lady Chatterley's Lover's D.H Lawrence

The novel Lady's Chatterley's Lover was published for the first time privately in Florence , Italy in 1928 as Lawrence could not have it published at home, in England . It considered disreputable as it depicts“...the physical relation between a working – class man and an aristocratic woman, its explicit descriptions of sex, and its use of (at the time) unprintable words “ (en.wikipedia.org/Lady Chatterley's Lover).

The events of the story have originated from Lawrence's own unhappy life, it is about a Lady Chatterley the former Constance Reid, a young married woman who lives with her impotent

husband Sir Clifford Chatterley described as a handsome, well-built man from the upper class, who has been paralyzed from the waist down during the First World War. At first, this lady tries to accept her husband as he is and starts living with him as he returns from the war.

However, as time goes by she turns to the game keeper to the estate where she and her husband live at to meet her sexual needs as she grasps the fact “ that she cannot live with the mind alone; she must also be alive physically.” (en.wikiprdia.org/Lady Chatterley’s Lover)

Chatterley’s sexual frustration leads her into an affair with the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. The major motif of the novel was highlighted by the difference of classes between the couple. The novel centers on Constance’s realization that Chatterley cannot live with the mind alone, the physical relationship is necessary in the married life. This realization stems from a heightened sexual experience. Constance has only felt with Mellors, assuming that love can only be felt with the element of body, but not the mind. *The Lady Chatterley’s Lover* argued for an individual regeneration which can be found only by the relationship between man and women. In this novel, Lawrence explores a wide range of different types of relationships.

When Lawrence done with the first version of *Lady’s Chatterley’s Lover* in 1926, he did not openly state the sexual encounters between Lady Chatterley and the game keeper who Lawrence named then Parkin. (Lawrence, 2007: V) Soon after, Lawrence wrote s second version where he used the four letter words without any restraint. Only one or two of these words were to be found in the first version. Hence, this version proved to be unpublishable. (2007: VI) Lawrence then rewrote the novel for the third time and had it published himself as stated above privately in Florence, Italy and then he sent out copies of it to Britain and the US and this paid off handsomely as it helped the author to manage his life better at a time when he needed financial support. (2007: VI).

Lady Chatterley’s Lover is a novel where the dominant features represented in it is the ‘sexual relations’ that is taking place between the Lady Chatterley and the game keeper, Mellors. And

it is quite hilarious what “ . . .the director of public prosecutions attempted in the 1960 to prevent Penguin Books from publishing an expurgated version, . . .” of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* as he “ . . .may have been wrong to claim that it contained nothing except sex, but sexual relations are quite clearly and designedly its main topic”. “And as for Lawrence “ . . .intentions in describing those relations in such a detail was not titillate, however often since that may have been the effect” (2007: VI).

The critical circle who assault *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* as an indecent work may be equating pornography with the explicit sexual descriptions used by Lawrence . But, Lawrence defines pornography as “ . . .the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on itThe insult to the human body.

To argue the point I shall consider D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* as a novel that empowers the female protagonist through her sexuality. In her study *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett attacked D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* on the grounds that Lawrence advocates “phallic consciousness” (Lawrence ,238), or in Derridean terms, phallogentrism. Millett presents Constance Chatterley’s yearning for motherhood as a feminine weakness as she, the “passive female” relies on the “active male” in order to become fulfilled. Yet if we examine the following passage in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, both Mellors and Constance are presented as individual subjects:

She had awakened the sleeping dogs of old voracious anger in him, anger against the self-willed female. And he was powerless, powerless. He knew it!

And she was angry against the self-willed male. A servant too! She walked sullenly home.

(Lawrence, 107)

Lawrence’s repetition of ‘self-willed’ describes both characters as autonomous subjects; the emotional reciprocity in fact emphasizes their equality. In “A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*”, Lawrence states that the whole point of the book was to encourage ‘men and women

to think about sex, fully, completely, honestly and cleanly' (Lawrence, 227). To label Lady Chatterley's Lover as a misogynistic work is also to criticize women who, like Constance, seek fulfilment in terms of sexual enjoyment and realising her maternal potential. Although Constance Chatterley and Bridget Jones are diametrically opposed in the literary canon, it would be fair to suggest that both protagonists are empowered as desirable objects who are able to negotiate their position in society through their own agency in choosing a desirable partner. Sexual fulfilment then should not be viewed as surrendering to phallocentrism, but a choice that women should be entitled to have.

2.4.2 George Moore's Esther Waters As a New Woman Novel

George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), which was published in the period of agitated debates over the labour movement, women's movement, changing gender roles, new custody rights, and single motherhood can be read as a New Woman novel, although its protagonist lacks some of the typical New Woman's features. Esther is not an independent, emancipated middle- or upper-class woman, but a victimised lower-class heroine and a quintessential mother who decides to raise her illegitimate son, and does so, struggling all her life against hardship and poverty. The novel describes realistically lower-class poverty, seduction, abandonment, new womanhood and single parenthood in late-Victorian England.

Esther Waters is rooted in the tradition of loosely connected novels published in the second half of the nineteenth century that can be described as the fallen woman fiction, or the novels of seduction and abandonment. Unlike the typical heroines of the fallen woman fiction, Esther is a woman who does not fall; she transgresses her social and gender limitations in a patriarchal Victorian society and eventually experiences a rewarding motherhood without marriage. She is a model for a New Woman emerging from the lower classes who ignores the

stigma of female fallenness and, as a single mother, against all odds, raises her illegitimate son to become a legitimate and respectable member of society.

Although George Moore draws chiefly on the fallen woman fiction written by Émile Zola and Gustave Flaubert in France, he is also indebted to the emerging New Woman fiction in England. He portrays Esther Waters as a poignant lower-class heroine who defies the Victorian myth of a fallen woman, which equated her with deviancy and moral deterioration. Moore held an ambivalent view of Zola's naturalism, and as a result, he created a powerful low-class heroine, an illiterate single mother with an illegitimate child, who stands far beyond the confines of Zola's method. Esther's fate defies the naturalistic belief in social determinism: the power of heredity and circumstances. Moore's heroine has a strong will and high moral standards despite the fact that she is perceived by some as an unrepentant fallen woman.

The novel contains some intertextual references to the English fallen woman fiction. In Esther Waters Moore reversed George Eliot's treatment of a fallen woman in *Adam Bede*, where Hetty Sorrel kills her baby to save herself from shame. Moore, in *A Communication to My Friends*, wrote that Hetty Sorrel prompted him to subvert the fallen woman stereotype in fiction. He wanted to show an unwed mother not as a helpless victim of a man's seduction, but as a proud single mother who is determined to raise her child against all odds and circumstances. "A woman's moulding of the subject, a true moulding" — he wrote — "would be Hetty living to save her child." (Moore, 67)

Moore decided to create a seduced and abandoned woman who, overcoming all prejudices and injustices, survives as a happy and self-fulfilled single mother, and raises her son to adulthood.

Esther Waters, the daughter of a housepainter, was brought up among the Plymouth Brethren. From childhood she was impelled to live in a cruel and unjust world. Unlike Gaskell's Ruth and Hardy's Tess, Esther is no ravishing village beauty, just "a girl of twenty, firmly built

with short strong arms and a plump neck that carried a well-turned head with dignity. Her well-formed nostrils redeemed her somewhat thick, fleshy nose” (Moore, 1). Indeed, Esther's greatest asset is not her beauty, but her strong female character which enables her to overcome all the obstacles and concentrate on one goal in her life — to raise her son.

The novel begins when Esther is sent out for domestic service in the Woodview mansion by her abusive and alcoholic stepfather. Esther hopes that her life in Woodview will be fulfilling, but soon she is seduced by a footman, William Latch, under a promise of marriage. Although he offers to marry her, he suddenly disappears with another woman. Esther, who gives birth to a child out of marriage in London's Charlotte Hospital, decides to raise it alone. Esther endures her situation as a seduced and abandoned woman, struggling bravely, and successfully, against adversities in her life. Her great maternal love endows her with strength and stamina that allow her to bring up her son.

Her personal self seemed entirely withdrawn; she existed like an atmosphere about the baby and lay absorbed in this life of her life, this flesh of her flesh, unconscious of herself as a sponge in warm sea-water. She touched this pulp of life, and was thrilled, and once more her senses swooned with love; it was still there. She remembered that the nurse had said it was a boy. She must see her boy, and her hands, working as in a dream, unwound him, and she gazed until he awoke and cried. She tried to hush him and to enfold him, but her strength failed; she could not help him, and fear came lest he should die; she strove to reach her hands to him, but all strength had gone from her, and his cries sounded hollow in her weak brain. Then, the nurse came and said: 'See what you have done, the poor child is all uncovered; no wonder he is crying. I will wrap him up, and you must not interfere with him again.' But as soon as the nurse turned away Esther had her child back in her arms. She could not sleep. She could not sleep for thinking of him, and the night passed in long adoration

Esther experiences poverty and humiliation, but when she brings up her little boy, she demonstrates courage and strength of character. In order to earn a living she works for a time as a wet-nurse. In Victorian England, wet-nurses were usually women who previously gave birth to an illegitimate child. They were usually sought in lying-in hospitals. This practice aroused controversy because wet nurses had their own babies whom they might neglect.

Although the Victorians treated unsupported, unmarried mothers with utmost severity, Esther, like the eponymous heroine of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Ruth* manages to survive with her child. She supports herself by her own labour. Esther is shown by Moore with a great degree of objectivism and realism. Although she is treated as a fallen woman, Fred Parson, an evangelical stationer's foreman and a member of the Salvation Army, is determined to marry her because he thinks that she has already atoned her sin.

The principal concern in *Esther Waters* is an unsentimental study of late Victorian poverty, economic exploitation of the lower classes, and the plight of poor single mothers. Other social themes include seduction, the immorality of baby farms and the evil of betting. Throughout the novel current social issues are intertwined with the fictional narrative.

Esther is a New Woman in spite of the fact that she does not have the awareness of middle-class New Women. As Rita S. Kranidis asserts, "Esther Waters is, in her simplicity and in her lack of awareness, essentially a nonpolitical being. Not bound by middle-class conventions, she appears to be the embodiment of feminist ideals in practice, but these are never articulated or preached. She is the New Woman minus the philosophical, political and ideological underpinnings for which she was notorious" (Rita, 114). Esther is a prototype of a working-class New Woman, who emerged in the British society at the turn of the 19th century due to the growing availability of female employment, and proved to be economically self-dependent. Many of them accepted single parenthood as a fact of life and were determined to raise their children in spite of all adverse circumstances and social stigmatisation.

Although Moore had a limited perception of working-class women, he succeeded in creating a convincing working-class New Woman character as a fulfilled mother and a single parent, who differed significantly from stereotypical late-Victorian upper-class militant spinster-feminists, ridiculed in fiction and the popular press.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature of the nineteenth century reflects widely on responses to women's experiences, particularly at home, family, marriage, and work. Feminism was the central theme of the novel of the long nineteenth century, which represents the questioning of societal assumptions about properties and rights that women struggle to get, especially for middle class women with aspirations to fulfil themselves by expressing their ideas and thoughts in their own ways. However, men also played a central role in participating in the feminist movement, a number of them have engaged with and contributed to feminist movement through literature

In this chapter we have shown the important role that literature played by both sexes and by writing women which in turn led to reach a very high point of awareness of the social consciousness and give this sex the values they deserve far from the domination of the men.

Chapter Three : Feminism in Heart of Darkness

3.1 Introduction

Through our feminist reading of Conrad's novella, we notice that it has many underlying tones about social issues such as feminism, it shows that the peripheral status of women is simply another example of European male power, women were further the men's agenda. In this chapter, we are going to focus on the representation of women in the story to reveal the subordinate status of women in the text and in the society the text represents and criticizes, by taking the role of women played in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' into consideration, and examine the idea that women are shown as being invisible characters in the book though Conrad's intentional exclusion of them from the main story line, there were minimal references to women, yet these references made towards them are incorporated in a quite and a unique way. We are also going to show as being invisible due to their lack of interpretation through critics who have not taken the position of analyzing the role of women in the story but mostly focus on the main character's lives. The current study seeks to shed light on the feminist perspectives. Our aim is attempting to know the real reasons that reflected Conrad's view. We hope to uncover sufficient information on Conrad's views of women during the time Heart of Darkness written.

3.2 Joseph Conrad Biography

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), a Polish expatriate born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, on December 3, 1857 in the city of Berdychiv in Russian-controlled Ukraine, Conrad was orphaned at the age of eleven; his father had been imprisoned by the Russians for his nationalist political activities, and both parents eventually succumbed to tuberculosis. He worked as a sailor on the French and British ships before becoming a naturalized British subject in 1886. He was considered as one of the greatest novelists in the English literature, he was a merchant in the British marine around 1878. He was granted the British nationality. Despite the fact that he did not speak the English language fluently till his twentieth, he was one of the novelists who brought a non English sensibility into English literature by his mastering of prose. He has many stories and novels with nautical setting.

He was regarded as an early modernist, many authors were influenced by his writing, his narrative style and anti heroic characters such as George Orwell, Philip Roth. His native Poland 's national experiences in the British and French merchant marine gave him the inspiration to write short stories and novels that include the European aspects such as colonialism, imperialism and sexuality which in turn explore the human psyche.

He worked for four years on the French ships after he moved to join the British merchant navy and served under Red Ensign for fifteen years. At the age of 36, he had become so fascinated with writing, he gave up the sea because of his poor health and the main reason is the lack of the ships. So, he had decided on a literary career. Conrad showed himself in many of his works prose and poet, so that the characters in Conrad novels were inspired by the persons he met in his life, he also borrowed the authentic names of actual individuals such as Captain Marlow, taking him as a framing device, which in turn make his stories more

complicated of imperialist adventure into labyrinthine upon the truth and falsehood, the character of "Marlow" helped him foreground issues of an unreliable narrator and the ambiguity and the complicated relation between subjectivity and epistemology. Throughout his life, Conrad was an outsider and felt himself lonely, an isolated, he was an outsider in exile, an outsider also during his visits to his family in the Ukraine, an outsider in French and British ships and an outsider as an English writer, he called himself a "bloody foreigner". He developed an elaborate, beautiful English prose style and probed many of the deep questions of modern fiction in his short stories and novels. His work was by turns adventurous and darkly pessimistic, interested in the traditional virtues of steadfastness and courage while also concerned with the epistemological lacunae that defines modern existence and perception. One of the most noted practitioners of literary impressionism, Conrad offered a fictional rendering of subjective response that had a profound impact on writers like Ford Madox Ford and Virginia Woolf. He wrote that the primary task of the novelist was "to make you see".

From the 1890s, Conrad's service at sea took him to many foreign ports and cities, including Australia, the Malay states, and the Belgian Congo. Around 1890, Conrad began fictionalizing his seafaring experiences. An admirer of Gustave Flaubert, he became friendly with Henry James, H.G. Wells, Ford Madox Ford, and other major writers of the early modernist period. Conrad wrote many great novels such as: *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911). In 1897, Conrad set in a Congo exploited by King Leopold of Belgium when he wrote "Heart of Darkness" 1899 a novel contains bitter reflections on colonialism, imperialism and "Feminism" the most sensible point in which we are going to highlight in our topic. At the end of Conrad's life from 1911 until his death in 1925, though his works are still well received, he was considered weaker than his earlier masterpieces such as *Nostromo* and *Heart*

of Darkness when he wrote less of adventures in foreign lands and domestic issues, less of life in the liminal spaces of the ocean and more of firmly grounded civilization.

3.3 Heart of Darkness Synopsis

Joseph Conrad's chilling 1899 masterpiece, *Heart of Darkness*, the events took place in a period when the trade of ivory was at the top of prosperity and this led the Belgian to colonize the wild sea of the Congo. The novella consists of three parts in which it centers on Joseph Conrad's protagonist Charlie Marlow's adventure crossing the Kongo River as a sailor who is telling his own story. Marlow a thoughtful mariner It presents a far more complicated vision of women and the men who love -or not- them. The plot centers upon a man named Marlow and his search for Kurtz, a station-manager-gone-rogue in the jungles of the Belgian-controlled African Congo, a nation of dense jungles and a brutal history of oppression by the European empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marlow lived the cruelty in the company station where the Congolese people enforced in the company, they were treated in terrible way. Marlow was run by the station manager, he was trapped there because his ship has been sunk, he was waiting for the parts to repair it for several months. The manager and the brich manager seemed to be afraid of Kurtz as he was considered as a threat to their position. Kurtz was sick so the repair of the steamship was delayed. After Marlow repairing the ship, Marlow and his companions arrived at Kurtz' Inner Station, when they met the Russian trader who informed them about Kurtz' madness, as Marlow knew that Kurtz had established himself as a god in the surrounding territory in his search for ivory the fact that he was brutal in collecting it and even in treating the Congolese workers. A beautiful native woman Kurtz' mistress appeared in the ship. Kurtz disappeared, after looking for him, Marlow found him crawling all fours towards the native camp, Marlow convinced him to

return to the ship. Kurtz's health was degraded very fast. Kurtz died uttering his last words "the horror! the horror!" Marlow fell ill soon. When he returned to Europe he met Kurtz's fiancée who was still mourning despite it was one year since Kurtz's death. She praised him as he was a paragon of virtue. She asked what his last words were, Marlow did not tell her the truth, instead he said that his final word was "her name".

3.4 Heart of Darkness Characters Description

3.4.1 Marlow

The protagonist of the novella, Marlow is philosophical independent-minded, generally, skeptical of those around him. He is the storyteller. Although he shares many of the European prejudices, he has encountered enough debased white men to make him skeptical of imperialism. Marlow, the narrator, goes in the heart of Africa. His comments about women, and his response to the "dead negro" show him as a typical Englishman capable of insensitive jokes. Further, most readers tend to concentrate on him as the storyteller.

3.4.2 Kurtz

Marlow does not think very highly of Kurtz, he describes him as a feeble character, not very worthy of all the respect others have for him. He never speaks of Kurtz as a macho man, with a strong build of anything of the sort. He is almost made out to seem like a weak woman, only powerful through words.

3.4.3 Marlow's Aunt

When Marlow cannot get a job on his own, he ends up having to rely upon his aunt for the favor. He is ashamed of having to adhere to such measures, but has no other option. He says, "Then—would you believe it? I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work—to get a job. Heaven! Well, you see, the notion drove me" (Conrad, 43).

Before his departure, Marlow's aunt attempts to warn Marlow and give him advice, all which Marlow dismisses. He does not think his aunt has anything much useful to say. He does, however, hold his aunt close to his heart and he respects her. But like any other women, Marlow's aunt is just another woman to him. He does not believe women are capable of structuring the world on their own.

3.4.4 Savage woman

The savage woman described when Marlow first meets the Russian is portrayed as somewhat of a powerful woman, given her state. Though she is not regarded with much respect (from Marlow), she is still "savage and superb, wild eyed and magnificent" (Conrad, 106). Like most of other savages, she does not speak. Marlow describes her as a human being, a magnificent human being at that, but he emphasizes the fact that she is wild. Even the Russian does not like her. He tells Marlow of his attempts to keep her away and that he would gladly shoot her if she offered to go abroad.

The savage woman represents the very core of wilderness. Her symbolic characteristics allow Marlow to hide the true customs and culture of the natives, their difference. This allows Marlow to assert his own controlling power on them, so that he is able to remove the potentially dangerous forces these cultures may possess. This danger becomes explicit when the savage woman starts to move, and opens her arms to the sky. She is no longer the controlled symbol, but a real threat now. Assigning the woman with his own symbolic meanings, Marlow is able to impose his own reading on what is different, and he makes her an object of his vision.

The "savages" in general are not given any speech. Marlow never describes them as speaking in an understandable language. They simply make sound. Women, in turn are also not portrayed as speaking characters, with few exceptions. With this fact in hand, Marlow is classifying women to be almost, if not as low as the savages.

3.4.5 Intended

She is first introduced when Marlow mentions a girl being involved with Kurtz. He claims that she was “out of it- completely. They-the women I mean are out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own” (Conrad, 90). This already indicates that though Kurtz cried for her on his deathbed, she wasn’t truly involved in the business of Kurtz as much as might have been perceived.

When Kurtz dies, he is still holding on to the memory of his intended. He always calls her “My Intended”; very possessively, just as he speaks of his other belongings such as His station and His career and His ideas. Everything about Kurtz’s intended makes it seem like she is his property and he has direct power over her.

At the very end of the novel, Marlow goes to deliver the package to Kurtz Intended, who is still in mourning. She is unable to find evil in Kurtz, and thus Marlow portrays her as an unintelligent being. To him, Kurtz’s corruption was really obvious, but to intended, it was not so clear. He does not want to argue with her that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He almost treats her as child hiding the truth from her simply because he does not think she can bear to hear the truth. In a sense, Marlow does not think she is worthy of the truth, and so he tells her what she wants to hear. “I could not tell her. It would have been too dark” (Conrad, 124).

3.5 Sexism in Heart of Darkness

the narrator of Marlow’s views and ideas about women embodies the 19th century view of women who are considered as the inferior sex in society. Only three minor female characters are presented in the novel. Marlow’s aunt, Kurtz’s mistress, and Kurtz’s “Intended”.

Female characters are represented as in a different way, and described as an “inferior sex”, they are just obedient and loyal to men as they expect them to be, their duty is to wait for their men to come back from their trip which they are not part of it. Men keep women very far

from the truth of life that they only to be close of it;“Girl! What?Did I mention a girl ?Oh, she is out of it completely. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse.”

Women are not strong enough to be close to the truth which men are, and women are just objects their function“ duty“ is just to help men when they need.

By mentioning these female characters , Marlow aims to give the literal aspect of his tale more substance.As they definitely play an important role in the novel, Marlow does not deal with them in the primary theme of the story.He focuses in the beginning on how his journey into the heart of darkness contrasts the “white“ hearts of he black people and the“black“ hearts of the whites who exploit them, and cruelly, and how it led to marlow’s self – discovery.

The limited depiction of female characters in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and the way in which the three female characters are referred to by Marlow reflect views of women as an inferior sex.

Taking the“ Aunt“ as an examlpe when she serves as his mother, she helps Marlow in plan his journey, and to get a job in the company, and as a nurse when she nurses him when returning from his trip, but she deserves less gratitude. This shows the remarkable difference in how men are dominant characters. Although female characters are not in abundance, their role (and absence their of) paint an obvious view of their societal value at the time.

Marlow, in the beginning of the story tells how he “CharlieMarlow, set the women to work – to get a job“.He tells this to show he was very desperate to travel in the trade industry, the unthinkable thing at that time is that he asked a woman for financial assistance His aunt ,“The woman“ transcended the traditional role of women .She said that she would be very delighted by helping him, the story shows to the reader how Marlow was capable to travel to the Congo. In another concept, Joseph Conrad illustrated the inferior role of women in society

during the nineteenth century .Two other women are mentioned later in the story, when Marlow has arrived at the Inner Station he tells a little bit about the “Intended” Kurtz’s fiancée who was to marry Kurtz when he returned . She appeared at the end of the novel when Marlow visits her and lies to her about Kurtz dying words .Though the intended has a significant role in the novel her role did not affect in the major theme of the novella .

Another female character , the Kurtz’s African mistress , is appeared at the end of the novel, two times while Marlow is talking tot he Russian and she says that she makes mislead , she appears also when Kurtz and Marlow depart on the steamboat , she stretches her arms to the steamer when Marlowblows the whistle .

Ships have always been identified as feminine nouns, as they are often in this story, they carry respect, they are symbol of safety from the oppression of the sea. Yet, there is a contradiction in how Marlow did represent females characters as a “ball and chain” and the reason of restlessness and are not deserve respect.

In Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness the female characters are depicted in limited way Marlow reffered to these three female characters in a way in which reflects Marlow’s views who considers women as inferior human being .While the women play an important role in the story, they do non influence the main theme in the story, in which is of Marlow’s exploration of the darkness which is inherent in the human soul . It is an evident in the savage black people , yet more than that in the savage treatment of white people towards the blacks those peoplecall themselves nobles and civilized .

Many social issues are discussed in Heart of Darkness such as sexism , racism, and corruption. There are minimal references to women however these references are incorporated into the novel in a unique and a quite way . In Heart of Darkness , Joseph depicts how the women are reffered in a negative light, instead of a neutral one. He focuses on women in his novel in order to lead to the discussion of Conrad’s use of sexism in his stories . He

emphasizes the place of women as being a translucent background figure , shielded and protected from the separate sphere of man's world .

Many sexism and gender stereotypes in "Heart of Darkness" Kathryn Smith tackles the main theme of the novel :Women, Symbolism and Resistance, Kathryn presents different views with regards to the role of women the Intended and the Mistress, represent as symbols of colonialism. Women in the novel are represented as symbols in which Kurtz's Intended is represented as embodying the civilized white woman while the Mistress represents savagery and darkness .These depictions highlight the symbolic importance of women in the novel and their relationship colonialism and representation of colonial power .

3.6 Imperialism and patriarchal :

Smith claims that "Despite the patriarchal and the imperialism elements written and narrated throughout the text, however, a feminist critique can reveal important ways in which the Mistress and Intended defy Marlow's categorization" . By analyzing women's role , Smith focuses on the need to read the colonial masculine – centred literary pieces in a post colonial and feminist viewpoint .

The novel is considered as a combination of imperialism and patriarchal which in turn shows the colonial exploitation as inseparable from the feminine and justifies the exclusion of women in the concept of a feminine ideal which Marlow intended to preserve. Conrad supports the idea of discrimination and separation of men and women's spheres . Heart of Darkness is shown as a masculine appropriation of the traditional fairy tale structure , many features are represented such as greed , lies and exploitation which Conrad turns these topics into social criticism . This union of patriarchal and imperialist visions informs the masculine perceptions of the basic assumptions that organize our thinking. We are conditioned by the basic assumptions, because they form an internalized ideology. Does Conrad's text, then, aim to colonize and pacify the savage darkness and women ?Just like the savages, women are

silenced and kept out :''They-the women I mean- are out of it- should be out of it.We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours lets get worse''(Conrad, 63). Here, it is evident that the narrator tries to impose a certain ideological view on the status of women that they are not considered as natural parts of the masculine world,which is, the whole world itself,but the language he uses shows an inherent contradiction in this view.

The novel centers on the issues surrounding imperialism , it was just as Marlow moves from the Outer Station to the Central Station crossing the river to the Inner Station, scenes of cruelty, torture and near slavery. It seemed obviously in the scenery of the book which illustrates a harch picture of colonial entreprise . The reason behind Marlow's adventures dealt with the hypocritical rhetoric to justify imperialism .Men who work for the company where the treatment of the Africans is more than a project of ''civilization'' . Kurtz in another side does not trade but takes ivory by force, and he expresses his treatments of the natives as ''supression''and ''extermination''.He makes his way of ruling through intimidation and violence very clear to all and he does not hide this cruelty. His success exposes the evil practices behind European activity in Africa .

For Kurtz and Marlow and even for the company , Africans are mostly objects :Marlow considered his helmsman as a machine or a piece of it, and the African mistress of Kurtz is a piece of statuary. One can argue that Heart of Darkness is a clear image of the oppression towards nonwhite people that is more cruel and much harder to remedy that the abuse of Kurtzor of the men of the company .

Heart of Darkness presents a powerful view about condemnation of the hypocritical operations of imperialism ,and it also presents issues surrounding racism .

Minimal references to women are mentioned in Heart of Darkness, however these references that made towards women are incorporated through the story in a quite and a unique way .Many critics discussing this point of view, some of them argue that women are

seen as background figures, motionless, detracting, and just neutral characters, others see that the female characters are shown with a negative light. These interpretations and the minimal references that Conrad depicted women shown how does he presents such a gender in Heart of Darkness upon his use of sexism in his stories.

Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochere''Heart of Darkness'' presents the interpretations of the sexist tones in Conrad's masterpieces, these interpretations focus upon the neutrality of women in Joseph Conrad's novel, by making a comparison of women's place in Heart of Darkness to her place in Grimm Brothers' Rumpelstiltskin fairytale in which we can see the notion of female exploitation very clearly. Dutheil argued that Heat of Darkness is a collaborative work between imperialism and patriarchal, it depicts the colonial exploitation which is an inseparable issue from the feminine and justified the exclusion of women in the name of feminine ideal that Captain Marlow tries to preserve . Conrad was agree with those who support the separation of spheres of men and women, he assumes that both of the spheres never should cross over into the other one. Women in Heart of Darkness are depicted as characters who are in need to stay ignorant of all harsh realities, this can be seen when Marlow hid the truth of Kurtz's dying words from his intended to protect and keep her in the dark, the few female characters are shown as being out of place figures, not adding to the cruel realities of life. The novel is shown as a masculine appropriation of the traditional fairytales structure which has the features of greed lies, and exploitation, however, Conrad transforms these topics to social criticism by making such subjects deeply rooted piece of literature.He focuses upon the place of women as a translucent figure, protected from the separate sphere of man's world.

It can be seen with the aunt of Marlow who helps him by getting him a job with the company which he could not do it on his own. There are also many events which characterise the woman in particular, like the knitters who were working with the black wool ;welcomed by Marlow ''into the negative world of darkness''. Conrad in his novel considered women as odd

characters who have no role and no reflection on the events of the story, even on the other characters with no real role, and no real value, whomever, these women later have a lot of power. Gabrielle Mc Intire assumes that feminist readers of the novel are disappointed when reading the novel because of their sexist ideas and most of the analysis and reports are from males. The sexist and gender stereotypes in *Heart of Darkness* are argued as being linked with the harsh concept of racism.

3.7 *Heart of Darkness*' Sexist Quotes

Quote 1

"Then—would you believe it?—I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work—to get a job. Heavens! Well, you see, the notion drove me. I had an aunt, a dear enthusiastic soul. She wrote: 'It will be delightful. I am ready to do anything, anything for you. It's a glorious idea. I know the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,' etc. She was determined to make no end of fuss to get me appointed skipper of a river steamboat, if such was my fancy." (Conrad, 20)

In the only twenty paragraphs into the book, there is a powerful woman she "Marlow's Aunt" only has power because she knows powerful men, or powerful men's wives

Quote 2

"It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything like it, and never can be. It's too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living

contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over." (Conrad, 28)

Marlow thinks that women are naïve and idealistic, believing in fantastic and utopian worlds that would never work in the reality he knows.

Quote 3

"Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she's out of it - completely. They - the women, I mean - are out of it - should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse." (Conrad, 29)

At the first mention of the Intended, Marlow scoots back to his opinion of women as completely out of touch with reality. But their fantastic visions of world peace are so touching and beautiful that he does not want to disillusion them with the ugly truth, since they probably couldn't handle it.

3.8 Women and Silence in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is canonical, and studied in countless classrooms from high school through graduate school. Nevertheless, it is a book that deeply bothers a lot of people, myself included. Throughout the book the only female name ever mentioned is the name of the ship. Women are silent, and frequently disdained by the paternalistic narrator who admits to not really understanding the "world" that women live in.

It is in a visit to his Aunt, his last foray into conventional civilization before he embarks on his transformative journey. Marlow notes.

"It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and their had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some counfounded fact we

men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over“ (Conrad, 28).

In fact Conrad's women are always a bit out of wordly, removed from the grime and violence of Marlow's perceptions of the world but yet having a very direct and significant affect on that world.

For example, it is Marlow's Aunt who is able to secure a job with the Company, which he could not do on his own. At his arrival to sign his contract and begins his journey, he was greeted by two women, knitting "black wool feverishly (Conrad, 25)" creating an ominous atmosphere that warns the reader of the darkness to come. One of the women leads him to the inner office. The other who seemed uncanny and fateful waxes him a look of unconcerned wisdom. To me, this woman represents my own approach to Marlow's journey.

As he struggles through the misery of what "men have been living contentedly with" and finds his own inability to be content, this woman and I glance at him over glasses, enjoying the irony of karmic return for his inexcusable misunderstanding of the dark reality that women do see all too clearly. In fact, only they are the free agents, knitters of destiny able to make choices unlike the men who are victims of their own animal natures. When Marlow is forced to acknowledge a woman's power, he calls her an apparition" (Conrad, 77) specifically referring to the Mistress of Kurtz who passes them savage and superb". Unnerving the men because of the influence she has attained over Kurtz. A woman who controls the darkness is too much for them, they want to kill her because they fear her. One of them says that if she had tried to come abroad "I would have tried to shoot her" (Conrad, 78).

At the end of the work, Marlow visits the Fiance of Kurtz, who is dressed all in black, still mourning the death of Kurtz a few years after. Throughout the work, Marlow is continually confronted with the mythology surrounding "Mistah Kurtz", and in this woman he finds it in full bloom. Has he learned from his earlier pronouncement? Does he seek to bring truth to

this woman? No, in fact, he echoes his earlier sentiments through his actions. He protects her from the harsh reality of Kurtz's madness and death. Supplanting his final words "the horror, the horror" by telling her he said her name at the last. In this, Marlow demonstrates that he has passed through these horrors with more questions than answers. He still does not see clearly the nature of humanity, only that there are horrors he would choose to forget if he could because his own worldview has "gone to pieces before the first sunset". He is still incapable of going to these women, the keepers, the wearers, the knitters of darkness, to understand what has befallen him in new ways or to seek to bridge the gap, he perceives between the sexes. Nor is he capable of escaping the methodologies that hold his concepts of civilization and humanity in place. Conrad's women remain otherworldly through the eyes of Marlow, removed from "the horror" although they both influence and are influenced by it. In "A Critical History", Rose Murfin writes, "For Nina Pelican Straus, the scene of Marlow's famous lie is but the most memorable of many that affect male and female readers differently, reminding the latter that this is a tale 'concerned with a kind of main stream male experience' that has been Marlow and Kurtz" may be "part of the horror that Conrad intends to disclose", Straus maintains that "the feminist readers' access 'to Conrad's most famous work is 'especially problematic', a fact she uses to explain decades of nearly exclusive male commentary surrounding *Heart of Darkness* (Murfin, 109).

Upon reading this commentary, I had a powerful sense of vindication – the relief of solidarity in my creeping discomfort when reading *Heart of Darkness*. I firmly believe, along with the gender studies camp, that gender is contrast. Nevertheless, it is a contrast that has programmed my literary computer, and entering the binary codes of Conrad, form leads to flashing messages of "File Not Found!" and an overwhelming sense of not being loaded with the proper software. Murfin continues his examination of the feminist perspective with the opinion of Bette London, who states "that *Heart of Darkness* is an off-putting tale for female, not to mention feminist, readers." Further, she argues that the issue of sex and

gender are linked with then issue of racism that Chinua Achebe addressed in his famous 1975 speech at the University of Massachusettes in which he completely attacks the novel for its dualistic, anti – African perspective.

Murfin questions Achebe's stating that "perhaps with good reason" his readers have "already dismissed" it as extreme (Murfin, 107). Yet, it is difficult to summarily discount Achebe, whose experiences with and view point of imperialism to keenly erupts from his background as a Nigerian and novelist.

Known for his rending of race relations, Is Joseph Conrad is a bloody racist", as Achebe so vehemently attests, or a sexist as Straus and London seem to imply ? Perhaps he is nothing more than a novelist – but one whose writing betrays the deeply ingrained racism, sexism and imperialism of the dominant culture that programmed his literary computer .

As does Marlow, Conrad remains faithful to the belief that the delecacy of women and civilization must be protected from "Darkness " and the "savagery" that anything not quite so heartily British might imply . In Heart of Darkness, Conrad creates a file that, in my opinion, can only be completely accepted and parsed when one's literary computer is equipped with imperialist Patriarchy.

Yet, one version of Patriarchy exists in all of us, the subscription to Western civilization Heart of Darkness, in the opinion of Achebe, Straus, London, myself , and countless other critics, is one such text. It is female characters, though they do have agency, seem to have it because they are workers of "darkness", afflicted with the same "blackness" that Conrad abhors in the natives of Africa.

Ultimtely , choice and agency are , in Conrad's view, extemely uncivilized, and utterly feminine.

3.9 Heart of Darkness' Feminist Criticism

Readers of Heart of Darkness can clearly understand the values of gender that Conrad is endorsing by the binary opposition of men and women in the novel, because of the cultural and social norms during that period, the characters are written and act as they do, since the novel was written in the patriarchal society of the scramble of Africa when social Darwinism and Eurocentric ideals were prevalent (Bombar Diari). By a better understanding of Conrad's life, the reasons for the sexist ideas in his writing can be better explained.

If, however, the attention is directed to language, and to the ways in which meaning is produced, a decidedly male realm is encountered. The values that language is loaded with are masculine dominated because the language used in the text gives us a binary logic that associates light, activity and thought with masculinity, and dark passivity and emotion with femininity.

Feminist criticism of the text uncovers this overlooked element and challenges this already accepted symbolism. First of all, this is a story about manly adventure, narrated by a man. Secondly, he uses an overt male language. When Marlow states: "We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness." (Conrad, 59), his use of the sexual metaphor of penetration already associates darkness with women. Here it is how he uses language to reflect masculinity:

The mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in it, all the past as well as the future.

Here, Marlow is not only universalising a relative concept like truth, but also making it an all male meta-narrative which only men can comprehend because of their vast intellectual capacity: and thus, he is excluding women from the realm of wisdom without a second thought. But his assertion that male speech "cannot be silenced," already implies the ironic displacement within itself. Is there, then, a possibility, and resists his displacement. This masculine language connects itself with the masculine value system, in other words, with the

culture and ideology of Western societies which place it in a complex interrelationship to the patriarchal and imperialist ideologies.

(Bombari Diari, 55)

In other words, ironically this assertion reverses itself because the women's world keeps the male world from deteriorating. The women and the savages, in this text are marginalised in the sense that they are speechless.

We never hear this voice. Thus, the commonly accepted interpretive analyses of the text would leave them out, and this would seem natural since the centre is always the male voice in the narrative. The native laundress, the savage women, the company women are all silenced.

Only Marlow's aunt and the intended are allowed to utter a few lines. Yet, all of them stand for darkness for Marlow and the reader unwittingly accepts this imposition. In this respect, the language of the text is permeated with an internalized ideology that is the unconscious basis of individual experience.

Although what we call natural is imposed upon language, they are very nature of language shows a gap between the text and its imposed meanings. In this sense language reveals the contradictions, and shows what seems to be the unnatural as difference, not as 'unnatural'.

In short, this kind of alternative reading of the text opens the reader's consciousness to broader and more comprehensive perspectives. It is rewarding because it shows how to restore the deliberately marginalized and undermined elements of texts. It also questions how the masculine representations is a fairly unconscious process.

It seems quite natural to subscribe to the ideology inherent in them. Feminist readings show them to be deceptive, and they attempt to refine these basic assumptions : furthermore, feminist readings direct our attention to the infinite variations of the same text in it

interpretations, and point to the text's difference from its own basic assumptions as we have seen in the case of Heart of Darkness. Feminist criticism of this text challenges the sufficiency of its received critical opinion

Although this was the proper way to talk about the ship, it still indicates the male dominance over the feminized boat. He and the other men are always in control of the ship, insinuating that like a ship, women are under men's control. They are useless without men to guide them.

“ Her ensign dropped limp like a rag ; the muzzles of the of the long six-inch guns stuck out all over the low hull; the greasy, slimy swell swang her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, uncomprehensible, firing into a continent“ (Conrad, 49).

The novella ‘Heart of Darkness‘ have been discussed by many scholars and students as a great piece of fiction and especially for its problematic topics .Chinua Achebe argued that the text of the novel is racist and it should never seen as a great piece of literary work.

However, others defend Conrad's work arguing that the text shows and investigates the racism during that period of time.

Another main point that has been discussed is the presence- or lack thereof- of women in the novel. The question is why the portrayal of women in ‘Heart of Darkness‘ differs greatly from the portrayal of men and how this portrayal is sexist.

The sexist messages in the novella can be found due to its representation of women as non-complex figures for the male's view. For Marlow's perspective through the novel, women are not treated as competent figures compared to their male counterparts, they are treated as fanciful figures stuck in an idealistic world of their own creation.

The underlying sexism in Heart of Darkness has contains three main concepts, according to Achebe : Marlow's view of women's competency and grasp for reality, Marlow 's characterization of the African woman versus Kurtz's Intended, and the lack of the feminine narrative voices and names.

The main narrative voice of the journey states ‘‘It’s queer how out of touch with truth women are’’

(Conrad, 10). These words show how the mental state of women will be approached throughout the story and the sexist ideas that it contains. This view of females as being less grounded may come from Marlow who has no close female figures in his life and appears to have no feminine ties, except his Aunt who he treats with a little respect.

The lack of respect towards the female mind appears when Marlow becomes untruthful to Kurtz’s Intended about Kurtz’s utterances before death. That it can be seen at the end of the novella, when Kurtz’s Intended asks Marlow about the final words her beloved Kurtz, Marlow responds that it was ‘‘her name’’. This respon may be seen as Marlow’s opportunity to alter Kurtz’s legacy to a more ideal one.

Suzan Hagen in ‘‘Gender, Intelligence and Good Sex in Heart of Darkness’’ also introduces the idea that despite the fact that Marlow does not value the female mind, he still appreciates the alternate reality that women live in because ‘‘someone must be there to believe’’ the men’s ‘‘lies and give’’ the men ‘‘the mission to live them out’’ (Hagen, 51)

Another point in which the novella has sexist messages is that the female characters have little to no narrative voices. As Marlow states : ‘‘They the women, I mean, are out o fit, should be out of it’’(Conrad, 44)

Compared to the male characters, the desires of the female are never truly written to inspire, these women have just some influence, such as Marlow’s Aunt assisting to Marlow get a job, yet the novella never explores this influence in a way to make them more than an implication so, women in Heart of Darkness are not more than a vague shadow in terms of characterization. In addition, the female characters are given no names and are referred to by station or their relation to a male characters such as Kurtz’s Intended, Marlow’s Aunt, so the only characters that do have names are singularly male. This omission of names shows that the women in the novella relies entirely upon their relation to men and not as singular individuals.

Gabrielle Mc Intire in ‘Women Do Not Travel, Gender, Difference, and Incommensurability in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness’ states that only traditionally feminine name that appears in the story referring to an object Marlow’s ship The Nellie.

Mc Intire assumes that the naming of vassels (ships) under feminine names for the period was very common ‘nevertheless under scores the fact that he leaves every woman of his text unnamed’ (McIntire, 257) which means that Marlow gives more value to an inanimate object than female human beings.

By giving the name to the ship Marlow displays a connection felt with an object that supports him in his journey yet, by never naming the female characters, especially his Aunt who supports him by helping him to set a job, Marlow displays a lack of general connection and appreciation

Mc Intire argues Joseph Conrad’s intentional displacement and removal women from his novel , portraying them in a negative light .He writes , ‘‘throughout the book the only female name ever mentioned is the name of the ship‘‘. Women are disregarded by Joseph Conrad due to their limited role in the story . Conrad sees that the concept women is ironic , despite the fact that women have a limited role, they have a strong and a remarkable effect in the story on the other male characters .

It can be seen with the aunt of Marlow who helps him by getting him a job with the company which he could not do it on his own. There are also many events which characterise the woman in particular, like the knitters who were working with the black wool , welcomed by Marlow ‘‘into the negative world of darkness’’. Conrad in his novel considered women as odd characters who have no role and no reflection on the events of the story, even on the other characters with no real role, and no real value, whomever, these women later have a lot of power . Gabrielle Mc Intire assumes that feminist readers of the novel are disappointed when reading the novel because of their sexist ideas and most of the analysis and report are from

males. The sexist and gender stereotypes in *Heart of Darkness* are argued as being linked with the harsh concept of racism.

In addition, female's physical appearance is apparently worth mentioning in the novel.

In the first meeting with the African woman in the Congo, Marlow wastes no time to comment her physical appearance. He comments that she is "a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman" (Conrad, 55). Comparing with the European woman, Marlow seems to find the African woman other worldly due to her attractiveness despite her heritage and the lack of her refined culture. He says: "she was savage and superb, wild eyed and magnificent" (Conrad, 56). He defining her as "savage" because of her skin color.

To Marlow, despite the fact that she is magnificent, but she still African, as uncultured and dangerous as the rest of the Africans in his view. Marlow represents Kurtz's Intended as a lighter figure. She is dressed in black when she meets Marlow, but he describes her lightness, such as "this fair hair, the pale visage" (Conrad, 69)

The novel is sexist because it fails to represent women as competent human beings and to provide them with names. Giving more importance to the physical appearances rather than their narrative voice is a disservice to women in the novel. This can show that Conrad himself lacked respect of women would be difficult to prove. However, the fact which seems obviously is that he created a character that does not respect woman. Moreover, Marlow's point of view towards women's mind focusing upon the physical appearance prove that he is an unable narrator to provide the novel welcoming towards women. *Heart of Darkness* is a novella that lacks the respect that must be given to its female characters.

3.10 Conclusion

Heart of darkness is one of the great masterpieces of the early modernist novelist ‘‘Joseph Conrad’’, the novel reflects his point of view to the women and how they are silent . In this chapter, we have spoken about the feminist criticism on the darkness of Marlow’s life in the Congo and how do women set and their great and specific role in the story despite their minimal references.

Female characters are depicted in a limited way Marlow referred to the three female characters in a way in which reflects Marlow’s views who considers women as an inferior human being .While the women play an important role in the story, they do not influence the main theme in the story, in which is of Marlow’s exploration of the darkness which is inherent in the human soul .

One can clearly understand the value of gender that Conrad is endorsing by the binary opposition of men and women in Heart of Darkness because of the cultural and the social norms during the late nineteenth century .

General Conclusion

The limited depiction of female characters in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the way in which the three female characters are referred to by Marlow reflect Marlow's view of women as inferior. Marlow's opinion of women manifests the typical 19th century views of women. While the women do play key roles in the plot of the story, they do not influence the main theme of the story, which is of Marlow's exploration of the darkness which is inherent in the human soul. From this study, the reasons behind this limited depiction of women is Conrad's viewpoint towards them or the nature of the harsh colonialism conditions and the darkness of the Congolese river.

In the light of what has been discussed, it could be seen that female characters are represented in different way in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Though Feminism movement when this novel written reach its top of prosperity, women are described as the negative object or "other" "to men as the dominating "subject" who presented "humanity".

Women in the story are obedient and loyal, as men expect them to be. They served them and kept away from the truth which is the men's own right.

The novel represents a very complicated vision about women and their relationship with men. It gives a clear view of the brutal history of oppression by the European empires of the late nineteenth century, the limited depiction of female characters and the way in which they are referred to by the protagonist reflects the views of women as an inferior sex.

After searching, one can notice the obvious truth of Marlow's dismissive statement to discard the notion of feminine importance in Joseph Conrad's novel, focusing deeply instead upon the important issue which is the question of Marlow's racism and its cruel implications since the novel was written in the patriarchal society. Conrad ignored all what has a relation

with women despite their great part played by them which in turn would effect an injustice upon Heart of Darkness.

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