

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SIMILARITIES OF NICK CARRAWAY AND MARLOW AS MAIN  
CHARACTERS

This chapter- will discuss the similarities between Nick Carraway and Marlow as the main characters of the novels. Nick Carraway and Marlow are main characters because their stories are about them. The Great Gatsby is about Nick's experience in the corrupted New York City, while Heart of Darkness is about Marlow's adventure in the wild jungle of Congo. The first similarity is that as the main characters they are presented people who live surrounded by corrupt people. Besides, Nick's and Marlow's significant roles in the novels, especially in their relationships with the protagonists, are also similar. Then, they are similar because both undergo development in their personalities. And the final similarity is their loyalties to the protagonists until the end of the stories.

### 5.1. NICK AND **MARLOW** AS **MAIN** CHARACTERS ARE SURROUNDED BY CORRUPT PEOPLE

In New York Nick lives surrounded by corrupt people such as Tom, Daisy, Getsfoyl and Jordan as well as the other minor characters. Those people believe that materialism can determine their positions in society, that is why people cheat and do illegal business to get money and position. Besides, Nick also describes how people in The Great Gatsby have lived in illusions. Gatsby, the character Nick focuses on, has lived in a dream for a very long time and waited so patiently for a chance to get Daisy back instead of accepting the fact that she has become Tom's wife. Nick also describes Gatsby's parties attendants who dream of being rich and enjoying the pleasure of the higher class so that they come to the parties without being invited. Myrtle and her friends live against reality too, because they, together with Tom, behave like the high class just to be considered as the upper class.

Facing those kind of people Nick realises that: "... I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known" (Fitzgerald 1925 : 60). But he can tolerate what the others do because he himself has said : "... I'm inclined to reserve all judgment" (Fitzgerald, 1925: 1). Therefore, he is able to tolerate Jordan Baker's incurable

ble dishonesty. Once he thinks that he loves her because she is good looking and self-sufficient. But when her carelessness has exceeded the point of his tolerance, he decides to let her go away from his heart.

Nick can tolerate and let himself be involved in the actions but not in the sense that he is willing to follow the acts of the others which he perceives as their faults. He says that: "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (.Fitzgerald, 1925: 36). This is why he is able to accept Gatsby's desire and tolerate Tom's brutality, Daisy's irresponsibility and Jordan's defects and also to get along with them. And his good moral is seen through his loyalty to his principle. Although he has become rich and got along with the other corrupt rich people, he does not become like them.

Similar to Nick, Marlow is also a Rain character because his narration is about his experience as the captain of a steamer boat, and especially about his finding of truths about Kurtz and its effect on his personality.

As a main character in Heart of Darkness, Marlow's experience is similar to Nick's in The Great Gatsby. Nick sees immorality in the sense that people live in moral carelessness such as marriage betrayal, crime, corruption

and cheating, while Marlow sees it in the sense of man's harmful ambition for a position and of man's oppression to the others which usually is followed by cruelty, inhuman treatment and racial unrighteousness.

Marlow's good morality is seen when he reveals frequently his disapproval of the white's cruel treatment toward the negroes. He realizes that he cannot do anything to change or to stop it. Then the name of Kurtz and various comments about his job in the company begin to attract his attention, especially when he overhears the plan of the manager and his uncle to let the sick Kurtz die in his station. In his critic Jerome Thaie says that Marlow's decision to meet and to save Kurtz is motivated by his curiosity and hope that he will find "a good man in the midst of darkness and corruption" (Kimbrough, 1963: lei). Although finally Marlow admires Kurtz, it does not mean that Marlow is willing to follow what Kurtz has chosen for his life. This makes Marlow

## 5.2. NICK AND MARLOW AS MAIN CHARACTERS ARE COMPLEMENTS OF THE PROTAGONISTS

The next similarity between Marlow and Nick as the main characters is their roles in the novels. Both Nick and Marlow are important characters because they create

actions and become the complements of the protagonists. Nick is important because, being motivated by his admiration for Gatsby's patience in waiting for Daisy, he is the one who reunites Gatsby and Daisy. While Marlow is important, because he is the one who wants to find Kurtz. Only by finding Kurtz the reader gets the truth about Kurtz, that Kurtz has undergone moral degradation since he attends an "unspeakable rite" in which he becomes a god of cannibalism. Marlow has insisted on going to the Inner Station, so that Kurtz does not remain a name and unknown for the reader.

In The Great Gatsby Nick and Gatsby are complement to each other. The novel seems to show the contrast between them, yet the bond between them reveals that instead of opposites they are complements, opposing together to all the other characters (Mizen&r, 13S3: 102-103). Nick is Gatsby's complement since he the one who understands Gatsby and stands on his side. Gatsby's dream to meet Daisy again comes true only by Nick's help. Furthermore, only through Nick's narrations and comments the reader may understand 'Gatsby's dream and realise Gatsby's greatness. Marlow is the complement of Kurtz because through him the reader can understand why Kurtz chooses to be the god of cannibalism. Besides, Marlow's loyalty to Kurtz until the end of his story shows that Kurtz is

not a man to be blamed, cursed or punished regarding his evil choice. But Marlow wants the reader to understand and appreciate Kurtz's human decision. Marlow's important role is to create the reader's good impression or sympathy for Kurtz based on the humanity he believes.

### 5.3. NICK AND MARLOW UNDERGO PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The further similarity is that as the main characters, Nick Carraway and Marlow have undergone development in their personality and outlook. Among the other main characters of the novels, only Nick and Marlow experience development. Marlow admits that his adventure has made him wiser since it widened his outlook about the truth of man, i.e., the universal possibility of evil a man has. While Nick, after his return from the East, realizes that his getting along with the New York people has made him a more mature man.

At the opening paragraph of the novel, Nick has introduced himself as a moralist who has tendency to reserve all judgment which makes him able to get along with corrupt people. Besides, he has a belief that people were born with "unequally fundamental decencies" (Fitzgerald 1925 : 1), that every man has different standard of morality which is perhaps because of different family background. This belief has enabled him to tolerate the

corruption of the others, such as Gatsby, the Buchanans and Jordan and to get along with them. However, he has sensitiveness to fundamental decencies which, after his involvement with such corrupt people, compels him to make personal judgment upon those people which makes him get involved in actions. But in his involvement in actions, . he comes to a moment when he realises that his tolerance has come to its limit and that he has to choose which side he stands. Finding Gatsby's corruption is so much different from the others' and even Gatsby is better than the others, he chooses Gatsby's side. He feels that there is "solidarity between Gatsby" and him "against all the characters" (Fitzgerald, 1925: 166). Furthermore, the admiration he feels for Gatsby and his realisation that the corruption of the Buchanans and Jordan has come to the limit of his tolerance, Nick realizes that he has to take the consequence of his choice too. When Gatsby dies, Nick feels that he is responsible to conduct Gatsby's funeral since nobody cares about it. He says:

"I found myself on Gatsby's side and alone. ... I was responsible, because no one else was interested"

Nick's personality develops from that of a person who used to tolerate and accept other people's mistakes to a person who makes judgment and gets himself involved

in others people's problems and is responsible for his action.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow, the narrator also undergoes development in his outlook about human being through another man's self-discovery. Frequently, Marlow tells the reader how much the adventure affects him. Before he joins the company in Congo, he does not "knowj much about himself. But his long waiting for the rivets leads him to finding himself. He shares to the reader what he has achieved because of the delay of the rivets:

"No, I don't like work - no man does - but I like what is in the work, the chance to find yourself. Your own reality - for yourself, not for others what no other man can ever know" (Kimbrough, 1963:

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Moreover, Marlow's journey to Kurtz in the Inner Station is very important in the development of his personality and outlook, because through that journey Marlow gets "light" which becomes an illumination of his own self-discovery. He tells the reader: "It seemed to throw a kind of light on everything about me - and into my thoughts" (Kimbrough, 1963: 7). Marlow needs the "light" because there he only finds "darkness", i. e., the cruelty of the white imperialists toward the negroes and the corruption of the company officials. And Marlow considers Kurtz as the "light" because many people in the station say that Kurtz belongs to "the gang of virtue".



However, he does not find what he has expected, a good man in the midst of darkness and corruption. Jerome Thale says that instead of finding the light, he "receives a terrible illumination" (Ximbrough, 1953: 181). Kurtz's self-discovery of his existence is the illumination that Marlow receives. It is terrible, because it is the fact that everyone has capacity for evil and possibility to be like Kurtz. Yet, it is still an illumination since through it Marlow comes to know that man has the right to choose whether to be virtuous or evil since man's mind is capable of anything. By observing what happens to Kurtz, Marlow realizes that evil is a universal possibility, like what Lilian Feder says as "the potential hell in the heart of every man" (Kimbrough, 1963: 188). Recovering from his illness, Marlow returns to Europe and becomes wiser,, a man with a wider outlook.

#### 5.4. MICX AND MAELGW MAKE PERSONAL COMMITMENT

A change or development in personality is convincing if it is adequately motivated (Perrir.e, 1359: 87). But the process of the development cniy is not enough. The reader will be more convinced because there are real actions as the proofs that the •character's personality has developed.

Nick's becoming morally more mature and responsible

is seen when he does not remain tolerable with such corrupt people around him and like the others, leaves Gatsby alone. Because of the growth of his sense of responsibility he tries to make Gatsby's funeral honorable though nobody is interested in coming. His personality development is confirmed by his commitment to remain loyal to Gatsby and by breaking his relationship with the Buchanans and Jordan Eaker and by going back to the West where he was born.

Marlow, similar to Nick, at the end of his narration confirms his development in his outlook, too. The development becomes realistic when he tells the reader about his personal commitment. Instead of remaining as a strict moral person who hates and detests lies, he does  
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discovered that he himself has capability for evil. He says to Kurtz's girl that instead of "The Horror! The Horror:", her name is Mr. Kurtz's last words. Besides, the purpose of this lie is to show the reader his loyalty to Mr. Kurtz. Furthermore, Marlow is forced to lie because he believes that women should be kept in their own world, the world of beauty and comfort, and people should not shake the world by bitterness or violence. So, Marlow wants to prevent the woman from further pain, he says: "the women I mean - are out of it - should be out of it"

because according to Marlow the fact about Kurtz " would have been too dark - too dark altogether" (Kimbrough, 1963: 49,79). This shows that Marlow has developed and becomes wiser. He knows how to choose between two evils: telling the truth and breaking the girls's heart or telling a lie and making her happy.