

## Imperializing Femininity: Falsehood Production and Consumption in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

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### Abstract

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has received a torrent of painstaking research as an intricate literary work which portrays the horrifying details of Marlow's physical and philosophical quest. However, within this framework does lurk a matrix of male chauvinism which relegates the female characters in the novella to irreversibly inferior positions and silent bodies. This necessitates a reading of Conrad's text that goes beyond the context of sexist innuendos in order to attain a deeper comprehension of the novella; that is, a contextualized reading which directs attention towards the variable of colonization and imperialism in the novella and its imperialist exploitation of femininity which makes women embrace specific roles and identities assigned to them while being deceived into thinking that they are ardent keepers of noble dreams. This paper argues that the female figures in the novella are imperialized by men in ways that make them consume the falsehood men produce about "the noble cause" and "the white man's burden". It also attempts to identify the reasons which make women accept such a subservient role by elaborating on the idea of human mimicry as discussed by Rene Girard in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. Girard claims that the person's desire for a certain object is not provoked by the object itself, but by another person who possesses the same object. This implies that the attraction of Conrad's women to the noble cause and to the wealth of the Congo extorted along with it has made them unquestionably accept the ancillary roles assigned to them by men, the possessors of the object. As more and more white people consider Africa a source of wealth, they became rivals, and since rivalry in Girard's theory leads to violence; a scapegoat is needed to prevent the disintegration of the colonizers. So, in *Heart of Darkness*, all the violence is directed against the black natives who are held responsible for violence to the extent that they fit in Girard's theory as the "scapegoat."

**Key Words:** Conrad, Gender in *Heart of Darkness*, Post Colonial novel