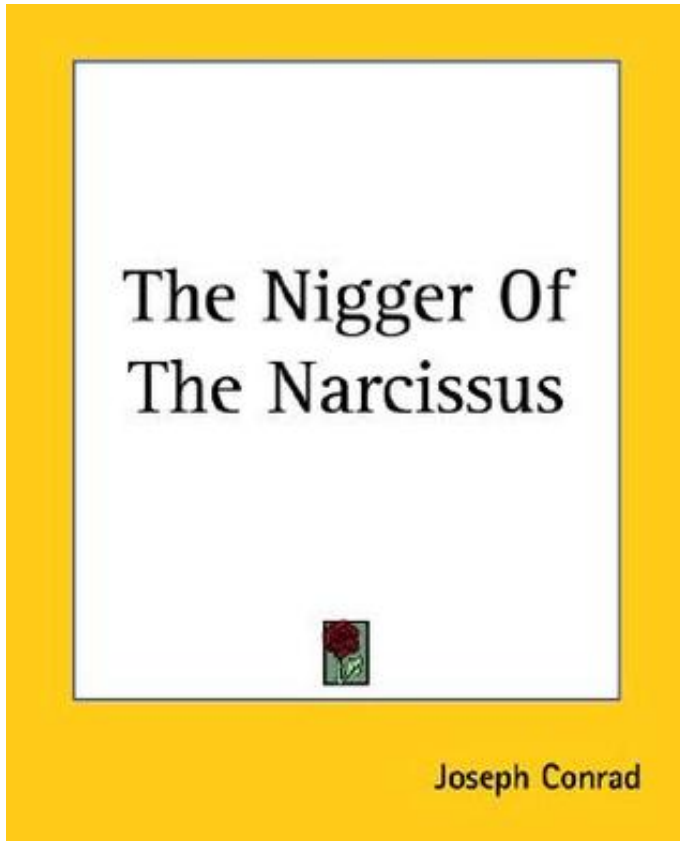

Joseph Conrad

The Nigger of the Narcissus



Title: The Nigger of the Narcissus

Author: Joseph Conrad

Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 112

Publisher: Kessinger Publishing,
1086048000

ISBN: 1419175602

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 8.2 MB

Download: allowed

Description

Meantime the *Narcissus*, with square yards, ran out of the fair monsoon. She drifted slowly, swinging round and round the compass, through a few days of baffling light airs. Under the patter of short warm showers, grumbling men whirled the heavy yards from side to side; they caught hold of the soaked ropes with groans and sighs, while their officers, sulky and dripping with rain water, unceasingly ordered them about in wearied voices.

Insightful reviews

Jose Vera: Joseph Conrad hace en este libro un despliegue magistral tanto de sus conocimientos de navegación como de la conducta humana.

Este pequeño universo que es el *Narcissus* nos entrega un sinnúmero de personajes que nos parecen reales y por los cuales sentimos tanto piedad como odio.

El *Narcissus* es un barco que va regresar de Bombay a Inglaterra, ha reunido a una tripulación y está pronto a partir. Es en ese momento cuando aparece James Wait, el último tripulante de la nave, y a su vez el único negro en ella.

La introducción que Conrad hace de Wait en la novela es algo que vale la pena leer de por sí. En un espacio tan pequeño como la cubierta de este velero agolpado de viejos y nuevos marinos, Conrad despliega una maestría y llega a mantener el misterio hasta el final de la escena acerca de quien es James Wait.

Pero James Wait no es un tipo cualquiera. Desde el inicio tenemos a un personaje controversial. Cada ayuda, cada condescendencia de la tripulación es respondida por Wait con sarcasmo e ironía, creando en él una diferencia notable con los demás miembros del barco.

Durante la travesía del *Narcissus* Wait cae enfermo de lo que parece ser tuberculosis, lo cual evita que haga su trabajo en cubierta. Esto desencadena una serie de eventos entre la tripulación haciendo que esta se divida en dos bandos, unos apoyando a Wait y otros odiándolo por mentiroso.

Es bajo esta premisa en donde en un momento de la travesía se desata una fuerte tormenta. Es un capítulo entero dedicado a este drama. Una de las mejores escenas que he leído en toda mi vida. Conrad es capaz de hacerte sentir el sabor del mar embravecido, de ver como se forma una costra de sal en la barba del timonel, de sufrir los embates del granizo. Sus realistas descripciones nos ponen en la piel de estos marineros que no sólo buscan sobrevivir a una de las peores tormentas en las que han estado, también está el esfuerzo de estos por salvar al Wait, que debido su enfermedad se encuentra encerrado en un camarote.

Donkin, un personaje de aspecto y comportamiento nefastos critica fuertemente el comportamiento inhumano del capitán Allistoun, incitando un motín entre la tripulación. Motín que es prontamente detenido por Allistoun y uno de sus oficiales. Cuando se leen las

descripciones que hace Conrad acerca del comportamiento y las decisiones que toma el capitán lo que tenemos es el retrato de un extraordinario hombre de mar, detallado al mínimo y dejando entrever la experiencia lograda tras largos años navegando.

El resto del viaje, el resto de la historia nos enfoca en el enfrentamiento entre Donkin y Wait, que está muriendo pero que no deja los comentarios sarcásticos y denigrantes de lado. En este punto el cisma de la tripulación es casi insalvable.

La llegada del *Narcissus* a puerto nos deja con un sabor agri dulce en la boca, luego de tan arduo viaje, de los sacrificios hechos por la tripulación, uno a uno se pierden en una noche de niebla, buscando su destino.

Bob: Obviously the title alone puts it somewhat beyond the pale for a high school curriculum - even the reader with a broader experience of the evolution of racial attitudes is going to approach in hopes of a more progressive stance than s/he's likely to get.

The title character is a West Indian (St. Kitts, I think) with an aristocratic demeanor and a resonant voice (one can imagine James Earl Jones in the part) who can mete out twice the disdain he receives, a sailor hired on in India for a trip back to England who immediately declares himself too ill to work. Although suggestions that he's malingering arise and at one point he sneers that he is in fact defrauding the chiefs, it turns out he is actually dying and ultimately deluding himself. All the other hands revolve around him as a sort of all-purpose "other"; the most iconic characters are the captain who embodies *noblesse oblige*, a Cockney left-wing agitator who we are persuaded to disdain, even though he gives voice to the reform movement of the latter 19th c. against the dreadful treatment of the merchant marine (that Conrad himself belatedly came around to, outgrowing the more "macho" libertarian attitude to seagoing culture of his earlier days) and the old salt, the 60-ish lifetime sailor who is as unquestioning of the class hierarchy of the ship as the captain.

The complex racial, social and political questions that Conrad raises despite the neutral authorial stance, the trope of the ship as a microcosm of society with a purity of purpose that is contrasted to the unexamined lives on the shore, and the sometimes breathtaking prose are all worth the work of reading it.

The other accomplishment of the book is what we would now call the "cinematic" descriptions of storms at sea - I found them dizzying and at times preferable to skim. Conrad was apparently influenced by the battle scenes in *The Red Badge of Courage* which I immediately picked up for comparison.

Warren: The poetic prose mimics the rhythm of the restless sea in a manner so gripping that the reader doesn't notice the long paragraphs and the dragging narrative. The beautiful descriptions of the ship and sea-life are equal to the best I have ever read. The use of the word "nigger" is disturbing to our modern sensibility, however, we must recognize that Conrad wrote in a different time immersed in a vastly different culture. I believe that one of Conrad's main goals was to emphasize how precious life is by surrounding the dark, isolated and dying main character with beautiful descriptions of ship, sky, and ocean. This was my second time around on this precious read.

Mike: A baffling narrative during which Conrad turns out to shift among the 3rd individual and the point-of-view of a staff member (indeed, i did not even trap on until eventually a number of pages into the paintings whilst Conrad casually throws in "our," implying a first-person perspective.) at the downside, the extra I learn of Conrad, the extra i locate his writing to be stodgy and stilted, as though i am interpreting a Victorian translation of non-English prose. Of course, for those very purposes he is the nice hyperlink among Romanticism and Modernism. Unfortunately, I simply have difficulty having fun with his paintings on both wavelength. Even so, his writing is simply fascinating and specific adequate to maintain me reading.

Marlin Elina: a fully engrossing story that happens on board of the Narcissus, a boat certain for England. It explores the microcosm on board of this send and examines human nature and tool family members as progressively more pressure is wear the crew. whereas the language used to be occasionally very dense and difficult to get via (and I struggled with the nautical terms, regardless of there being a glossary), it was once this type of profitable studying adventure within the end. darkish and fascinating.

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