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African Literature

Seven Steps to Heaven

The writer uses multiple uses of sexual language in his novel which is mainly mentioned on the basis of a women's sexual physical appearances. The women provide emotional support to men hence the men enjoy their company so therefore they enjoy going to bar's that exuded female allure because they would be smothered in loving tender care of the hostess , where the men would be treated like a king.

A women's sexuality has been mentioned several times in the novel. In the first chapter the writer described a women whom was "Sis Joy", A hulking giant of a women in a nightie so short and transparent you could see the dark mound at the joining of her thighs stood with her hands about her waist", these men where looking at her body, and admiring her with their eyes even has she plonked the alcohol on the floor infront of the two boys at the shebeen. Sis Joy even tells them "What are you doing undressing me with your eyes ?, the men were guilty has they looked away and their Adam's apples dance guiltily.

Lovey was a generous free spirited women who enjoyed life and was challenging amongst the men. She mastered the art of flirting and was good-looking."Her legs are spread wide apart,her short cream skirt exposing the fleshy insides of her thighs.Oh, if she could open just a bit , Thulani was praying ". She was a young shapely women , who not only enjoyed the company of men but also had an intimate affair with the reverend, in which they ran away together. She broke Mr and Mrs Tembe marriage . "She was all naked but for a white G-string". Reverend was soo tempted by her lust that he didnt want to depart from her , he even mentioned that she is his "sustenance". She showed satisfaction to him and pleased him which in the end didnt last long. Mr Dube also had an affair with Lovey,when Sizwe wanted to confess all his wrongdoings by telling his mother , his dad was so angry with rage that he ended up beating Sizwe. This shows that these men are weakened by the temptations of women. They fell into lust which is an act of sin. A reverend is someone who is holy and spiritual but he is the opposite of that which is very ironic.

Nolitha was a young inexperienced women who slept with Sizwe and Thulani.

She wore jeans that were torn in strategic places , exposing patches of her light-light-complexioned thighs. Later on both friends decided to give her a walk home , eventually they were caught up in a moment of sexual desire in which they slept with her and they even picked up an infection "venereal disease" Sizwe and Nolitha had sex on a nest of leaves and grass. This is evidence of sexual gratification.

Lettie was the owner of the shebeen in Paradise Road , she was known as the devourer of men and a breaker of marriages. Lettie was a good charmer who weakened men. As the writer says "Lettie matured like good wine - to perfection ". Men laid eyes on her , she was a beauty and she grabbed men's attention . "Older men , some of whom had sampled the pleasures of this lovely matron , felt pangs of hunger inside of them , she was in the realm of goddess". People assumed the owner would be an 'old crone' but Lettie was beautiful as she aged , infact she was miles ahead of her daughter Lovey. Lettie had a bad reputation when it came to men , many women disliked her and called her names like "whore" but to men she was the centre of attention and she knew how to make them drool.

Men visited the shebeen for drinking and indulgence of sex. They enjoyed the company of the hostess at the bar because the women would provide emotional support to the men. The hostess would explain how to treat their wife , why his wife was reluctant to have sex with him, why his wife's cooking has deteriorated over the years. As the writer says "Shebeen queens knew it all , and more" .Unlike men they didnt provide comforting words to the crumbling marriage , hence men found hostess more engaging because they provide emotional support to them. Men found comfort in other women who were experienced and knowledgeable. The flirtatious attitude of the women would always be counted on therefore men preferred shebeen's run by women.

Women are also being stereotyped by their husbands in the novel. The reverend tells Mr Dube that "All women of today are all the same. They've lost their touch with their proud African Culture of humility and good manners". Mrs Tember just asked questions without even inviting them for a cup of tea. He also stereotypes women by saying "Children of today. They are just like their mothers. Always selfish".

Even in Thulani's writing pieces in Ramu the Hermit he calls a woman a "slut" and asks her "Have you bewitched me into coming into your bed like the rest of your men? Men who waste their holy seed on you?", these women are just used as objects of desire and lust. And men are weakened by their charm and appearances. These women serve as sexual gratifications to the male characters. Men who go to shebeens to drown their sorrows, by drinking to solve their problems and make them feel good when it's just a temporary feeling, and when they enjoy being flirtatious around women or vice versa.

Lovey had a steamy affair with the Reverend and with Mr Dube, these men have sexual dalliances with Lovey, they broke an important covenant of their marriage all because of temptations and lust of a woman. They feel satisfied when they are with these women, they feel good. This shows that they cannot be confined to one woman. And Nolitha who slept with Sizwe and Thulani on the same night. She could have refused but she didn't, they enjoyed the moment, and they did not refuse the opportunity of sleeping with her. They were attracted to her. Lettie had a bad reputation of being a devourer of men, and a marriage breaker. This shows that she has broken many marriages, loves being around men, and carries a flirtatious attitude that lures men.

The novel displays powerful language structures, with many sexual gratifications and sexual words such as thighs, breast, cleavage etc. These women are known to charm men, and bring sexual desire to men which satisfies them but in the end their pleasure was just temporary and nothing lasted forever. It was just a moment of lust, which the men were weakened by. The men stereotyped women a lot in this novel, the women were good wives and mothers to their husbands and children but the men were disobedient in their marriages by having sexual affairs with other women and they display power and undue domination over women, they were just there for sex and a good time nothing else other than that and through this novel Fred Khumalo uses powerful language structures and humour to capture "us" readers' attention which in my opinion I found this book very open-minded, real and interesting which was not monotonous at all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Khumalo, Fred. 2007. Seven Steps to Heaven. Auckland Park: Jacana.

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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I declare that this assignment is my original work. Where secondary material has been used (either from a printed a source or from the internet), this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work.

Signiture : C.C.R

Date : 12 September 2016