

"the march"



"The March" by E. L. Doctorow's, is a narration that illustrates the hardships experienced during the war by some of his characters. As he puts it, "The oppressive maleness of them all unnerved her ... She realized this was a familiar feeling – a revulsion for their gender, its animalism, all the more offensive because they were unconscious of it. They existed and left the sensibility of it to her"(Doctorow 45). This opinion may easily explain Doctorow's approach to the content and essence of his book. The narration is about General Tecumseh Sherman's final successful storm at the end of the Civil War. As indicated, cities burn, crops and cattle are stolen and consumed and plantations are looted. In addition, there is the exodus of refugees, slave-owners, rebels, homeless slaves and unionists. The dangers experienced by this roving mass are channeled through Doctorow's mind and passionate feeling. His use of language outlines the novel's characters and plot, as well as offers additional insight into the situations in the narration.

The enthusiasm of the characters and their personal tales are subdued by the behemoth that the warpath of Sherman becomes. Consequently, the deep-seated mark of the monstrous war may be felt in the characters' bodies and souls. Instead of creating a predictable plot, the author formulates a strong storyline corresponding to the "march", which jolts, pushes forward, and aggresses. The narration brings to light the country's war and its dangers. Doctorow is bothered by the demolition of the human soul as a result of the war. Quite a good number of individuals in "The March" live indecently. This is substantiated by the statement, "...in all their animosity and revolting belligerence" (Doctorow 73). General Sherman's real march

was historically celebrated for allegedly freeing America from the injustices of slavery. It led to the stoppage of America's bloodiest wars.

A woman from the Southern society, Emily Thompson, was forced to move as a result of the war. She becomes involved with Sartorius as she joins his surgery and afterward, his bed. Wrede Sartorius was German-born medical doctor who, heartlessly, perfects the skill of surgical procedures on the battleground and envisages the therapeutic progress. In due course, she surrenders her virginity to him. However, this involvement ends up being a nightmare as it culminates to her exit from the march. The only individual in the story with the guts to go away from the crazy procession, Thompson, views Sartorius just as he is. He believes that Sartorius is among those people who "...persuade themselves they are civilized." Although Sartorius is on oath to "do no harm," he is a contributor to the ethical and scientific validation of torture and murder (Doctorow 93).

From the beginning of this narration, it is shown that two outstanding characters, Will Kirkland and Arly Wilcox, who were Confederate soldiers, had been detained and were waiting to be executed for minor offenses. However, they are set free in order to protect Milledgeville. The author asserts that the two, "...put on the Union uniform themselves, are captured by their own army, sworn back into the ranks as converts, switch back to act as Union prisoners of war, attach themselves a Union hospital, and then leave both armies behind after a debauched week in a whorehouse". On the other hand, after Will died, Arly laid the Confederate uniform on him again. Similarly, when Arly passes away after a failed try on the life of Sherman, he discards his photographer's cover up. The experiences of these two soldiers illustrate

the impact brought about by the war on their land. Nevertheless, it was not an accident that they died in their colors. As soon as the march comes to a stop, the game also ends. From the narration, it is evident that the clear and striking energy behind the author's systematic story is adequate in compensating these types of stereotyped sentiments (Doctorow 137).

With regard to the narration, it can be viewed that the black characters are quite evenly noble. In turn, this has led to a counterintuitive impact, which deprives them of the stature associated with the faulty whites. The war is a combination of both magnificence and humiliation, and it is only those characters that had been at its depth that appear to have completely seized these experiences. The end of Sherman is illustrated as he reprimands himself for desiring the march together with its "bestowal of meaning to the very ground trod upon, how it made every field and swamp and river into something of moral consequence." This came prior to his realizing of what he really admired. Doctorow indicates that the war was a, "...devastating manufacture of the bones of our sons". He goes on to say that it was, "a war after a war, a war before a war" (Doctorow 163).

The narration is fascinating based on its characters and atmosphere in which it was set. The author's language is well defined and centered on the theme of the story. The novel indicates not only the triumph of the army but also, the writing's and language's capacity to seal the empty spaces found in the plot. In addition, the set up serves to bring uncertainty and significant irony where a reader would only anticipate predictability. This narration filters emotional response through its well outlined prose, which sufficiently outdoes its own cliches. The author's passion and compassion makes the

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enables a reader to relate to the effects of the war, as well as be informed about history, particularly, of a nation fighting itself. The narrator has managed to express the characters' hardships clearly and show how the characters came to associate with one another.