

What contribution
does de bernieres
portrayal of carlo
guercio have on the
total ...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The character of Carlo Guercio is portrayed as a peripheral figure between the love of Corelli and Pelagia. Though Carlo is a marginal character in that part of the novel, overall, he plays a considerable part. There are many chapters dedicated to Carlo and through these chapters and through Carlo; De Bernieres manages to bring different themes of the novel together. These themes range from corruption, religion, history and love. Carlo experience a lot from the War, whether it is about himself, his friends or the true nature of the world that he lives in. Carlo seems to represent De Bernieres views.

Carlo is a character that witnesses a lot that goes on, either first hand in the war or when he comes to the Greek island of Cephallonia. De Bernieres wants to show that everyone, even the less important people, during the war or just day to day life, should have the right to get their view across, Carlo is a way of doing this. The chapters where Carlo speaks are in stark contrast to 'The Duce' chapter, where we hear the extraordinary nonsense that Mussolini speaks about. They show how corruption and power leads to people like Mussolini being in charge of a country and Carlo having to fight for him.

Carlo's experiences of the war, fought with his love Francesco, show the harshness of war and what the diminutive soldiers had to put up with. Though there is a calmness and tranquillity surrounding Cephallonia on the whole, De Bernieres graphic descriptions of the war show another side to it all. ' I dug a deep hole in our trench that filled instantly with ochre water... I buried him in a place inhabited by gigantic rats and tiny goats ', ' We could warm our heads... brains of dying mules. ' In Cephallonia there is a limited

amount of talk about the war abroad and especially the disgusting conditions and dreadful atrocities surrounding it.

This could be explained by the pride and propaganda coming from the front, Carlo says, ' History is the propaganda of the victors. ' The Death of Francesco is another description of the harshness that comes with the war but how it has all been glossed over, ' He died very quickly of a bullet through the heart. ' This is how Carlo describes the death to Francesco's mother, though he tells us the truth, ' I reached Francesco and saw that the side of his head had been blown away... He was still alive... in the trench Francesco took two hours to die. '

Throughout the novel we get an overall emphasis on love and the different forms that love takes. As soon as we meet Carlo he speaks of existing as l'omosessuale, the homosexual, and how he has to live that life in silence. At this time, especially in Italy with Mussolini in charge, homosexuality would be seen, ' that it is a perversion, an abomination in the sight of God... must marry... lead the life of a normal man, that I have a choice. ' As the novel progresses we see that love, whether homosexual or otherwise can shape a character and lead them to do things that they may not do when lacking this passion for love.

The ridicule that Carlo believes he would receive and the way he has to live his life shapes his character. Carlo believes that homosexuality is natural and not his fault, ' God made me as I am. ' He knows that his own people will not except him and decides that Greece is the answer, ' And do you know where I found myself? Do you know where I found out that I was, in another

vanished world, beautiful and true? It was in the writings of a Greek. ‘

Ancient Greek writings are well known to address the issues of homosexuality and the more relaxed perspective towards it.

Much of the inner torment that Carlo seems to suffer leads him to great things, in particular, joining the army. He feels that it is a good way of forgetting the pressure to marry and have children. He doesn't have to pretend about what he is not, ‘ I had to flirt with girls in the playground of the school... I had to learn to relate fabulous histories of what I had done with girls. ‘ Carlo proves that love can make you do great things later in the novel, when he sacrifices his own life for love, but he insists that he would do this when he joins the war.

I would not desert him in battle, he would make me an inspired hero... I would dare to die for him. ‘ We are shown that Carlo is true to his word when he sacrifices himself in the firing squad, trying to save Corelli. Carlo Guercio illustrates the corruption and the disorganisation of the Italian army and how it affected his life and therefore affected other people who Carlo came into contact with. The account from Il Duce highlights in one chapter the sign of things to come for Carlo if he joins the Italian army.

If Mussolini is in charge of the Italian war effort it is then hard to comprehend that there may be leaders filtering down dealing with the welfare of the soldiers. It shows how people come to power by manipulating history and playing with people's emotions and finally their lives. The corruption stemming from Mussolini has reached Carlo fighting at ground level and it has now become fatal disorganisation. ‘ Partially trained boys from the

country arrived at the wrong map reference and were annihilated by the Greeks... we had to retreat... we now had less territory than we possessed when we started.

The problems that Carlo faced were not just tactical disorganisation but they received no help from their clothing and equipment, ' we had no bandages or field hospitals... we have no supplies... we left behind our heavy equipment. It was worn out anyway. ' Carlo gives the impression of a lot of confusion from the troops; they didn't really know why they were there or what they were fighting for. Everyone was turning against the war and beginning to realise that all it seemed to bring was misery. Love still remained throughout this desolation but on a thin thread and a lot of the time it ended in depression.

This applies to most of the characters in the novel, no one wanted to fight a war in Cephallonia but in the end it came back to haunt them. The hatred of the Italian war effort remained in Francesco all the way up to and including his dying thoughts, ' Don't forget our pact to kill that bastard Rivolta. ' Carlo echoes Francesco's thoughts, ' Fuck the name of Italy. ' Carlo's rejection of the name of Italy shows how his own country's values of corruption and homosexuality have led him to think like this and it has now culminated in his great friend, Francesco, dying.

Carlo's claim to heroic status stems from his love for others. He does not perform heroically for his country or for the admiration of his fellow comrades. Carlo only seems to aim for the admiration of two people, and they are Francesco and Captain Corelli. He is willing to sacrifice himself for

the other and he proves this in two instances, ' I stood up and faced the Greeks. I was offering myself to their guns', and ' at the order to fire Carlo had stepped smartly sideways like a soldier forming ranks. Antonio Corelli, in a haze of nostalgia and forgetfulness, had found in front of him the titanic bulk of Carlo Guercio.

Stepping in front of Corelli during the firing squad was Carlo's most honourable act and it stands out above all the others as an act of heroism. Homer describes this act of love very well, ' Love of his own nature infuses into the lover. Love will make men dare to die for their beloved – love alone. ' It is hard to decide whether Carlo is a very influential character and a hero to the novel. Is he acting as a mouthpiece to De Bernieres scrutiny and views or he could just be l'omosessuale, a missing part to a story. To make him homosexual increases the way in which people can react to him.

Carlo is different, which makes him interesting but this view decreases the value that Carlo defiantly contributes to the novel. The fact that Carlo does act heroically and gives us descriptions of many different ongoing themes that surround every character in the book shows he probably isn't the ' token homosexual', but a significant and necessary inclusion. There are classical references to Carlo, which increase his status and his heroic ambience. Carlo is referred to as ' Titan,' which is not meant to be ironic and to mock as in Mandras's case but it is to enhance his character.

When we reach Carlo's burial scene we again see the indication of classical writing and methods. The funeral scene in classical writing was reserved for the important and heroic characters, ' He did not know it, but he buried Carlo

in the soil of Odysseus' time... they came out to say farewell to that heroic flesh. ' The final first person account from Carlo comes in his farewell letter to Antonio Corelli. This chapter titled ' Carlo's Farewell,' details his inner torment of the love he had but could not fully give to the Captain.

It once again shows how love has been the driving force for the actions of a person; in this case it is Carlo. It gives the impression that Carlo has been looking for approval, he wants people to think differently about him and not of what he thinks of himself, ' I hope you are not disgusted, and I hope that, because you have a big and generous heart, you will be able to forgive me and remember me without contempt. ' Maybe Carlo wanted to redeem himself, though he did have other opportunities to sacrifice himself, notably going over the trench into no man's land to save Francesco.

Overall, one of the main attributes that Louis de Bernieres portrayal of Carlo has is the means of bringing all the themes of the novel together. Carlo experiences all four of the main themes that are represented in this novel, which are corruption, religion, history and most important of all, love. The corruption and manipulation of the Italian army affect Carlo very much, to his cost in the end, the death of his one love, Francesco. Religion is important to Carlo though he loses touch through the issue of homosexuality, which he knows is condemned by the church.

The war, as most wars do, has many religious issues and Carlo finds himself fighting in this war even though he becomes very disillusioned towards it.

Carlo writes of his own experiences in Cephallonia and gives them to Corelli when he sends him the farewell letter. They would have given a good history

of what war in Cephallonia was like to the ‘ little people’. Pelagia resumes the writings of history by her father, and she held Carlo in great esteem after his heroic act for Corelli so he would have appeared many times in the history of this small Greek island.

Carlo loved Francesco and Corelli enough to sacrifice his own life for them, which he did for Corelli. Carlo’s love was not without reward even though he was homosexual. He took any pain that Francesco’s mother would have felt away, saved Corelli’s life and earned the love and respect of a friend from Pelagia. Carlo has a huge effect on the novel and he can claim heroic status, but he had more to him than just being a hero, ‘ He wanted to do something to compensate... he wasn’t just another hero, was he? He was more complicated. ‘