

**The Theme of Reversion in Joseph
Conrad`s
*Heart of Darkness***

By

Lamiaa Ahmed Rasheed

College of Education – Dyala University

2005

Abstract

It is clear that the physical universe began in darkness, and will end in it, the same holds for the world of human history ,which is dark in the sense of being obscure,a moral,and without purpose ; and so, essentially,is man. Through some fortuitous development, men have occasionally been able to bring light to this darkness in the form of civilization—a structure of behavior and belief which can sometimes keep the darkness at bay. But the mission of bringing light to darkness seems to be highly precarious,because the forces of darkness are much more omnipresent both in society and in the individuals than civilized people usually suppose.

Undoubtedly, this point of view of inspires Conrad to structure his *Heart of Darkness* as a journey of discovery,thereby he discovers that the darkness in the wilderness is the primary reality of the universe; and it stands for the darkness in the heart of every human being. In the process of exploring this theme, Conrad penetrates the obscure places of the human heart and shows how civilization operates to hide the dark side of man's inner nature. "you must search the darkest corners of your heart,the most remote recesses of your brain" (Conrad, quoted in Jelinek,65).

In this concern, *Heart of Darkness* suggests that when the individual is deprived of the stings of civilization and the usual support of society, he must rely on his own inner strength for moral and spiritual support; otherwise, he will be destroyed and reverted into a savage one. He will be in confrontation with his inner forces which, in his normal state, he manages to control. These forces, which are repressed by the

power of civilization, can be considered as the essence of the self; and the man, who is incapable of controlling his dark inner forces, runs the danger of becoming savage and mad, and this is clearly illustrated in *Heart of Darkness* . Thus, the present study sheds the light on the theme of reversion as illustrated by the characters of *Heart of Darkness* .

**The Theme of Reversion in
Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness***

I wish at first to put before you a general preposition: that a work of art is seldom limited to one elusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character...the symbolic conception of a work of art has this advantage, that it makes a triple appeal covering the whole field of life. All the great creations of literature have been symbolic, and in that way have gained in complexity, in power, in depth, and in beauty.

(Conrad, Quoted in Tucker, 28)

These words, by Conrad, suggest that he is writing on many levels: on one level it is the tale of adventure and exploration to discover the hidden truth of the universe: Throughout the novel Conrad tries to convey his own real experiences in the Congo. When he was a young boy, he had a passion for map-gazing and had exclaimed while looking at the blank space in Central Africa where the big River Congo flows: "when I grown up I go there" (Quoted in Jelinek, 7). So he draws upon his own real experiences in writing *Heart of Darkness* (1897).

On another level, *Heart of Darkness* is intended to be a bitter criticism of certain political and social injustices; it condemns apparently the capitalistic exploitation of imperialism through depicting it as cruelly selfish and as a means of domination and exploitation. Although imperialism is considered as a means of

liberating people from tyrannical rule or bringing them the blessings of Christian religion and of a superior civilization, Conrad is sincerely convinced of the fact that imperialism increases tyranny and exploitation in the primitive countries. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the colonization of the Congo, which was part of the "scramble for Africa". In 1875 less than one-tenth of Africa had turned into European colonies. So much of Conrad's fiction is based on actual facts and personal experiences for it was Conrad's intention to make his readers aware of the situation that prevailed in the Congo when he traveled there. He reacts bitterly against the colonization of the Congo calling it as "the vilest scramble loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience"(Quoted in Jelinek, 33).Hence, through *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad questions the value of white civilization and its desirability and benefits for the primitive countries. At the same time he tries to present colonization not as a political and economic venture only, but as a consequence of the individual's lust for power and possessiveness and even as example of man's capacity for evil(Jelinek,34).Therefore, Conrad's attack on imperialism was because:

he abhorred the barbaric treatment by European conquerors of African natives, the destruction of ancient civilization by arrogant men bringing not light but destruction, not progress but moral decline.

(Tucker, 36)

On a third level, *Heart of Darkness* is a study of the hidden world of the inner self and its capacity for evil significantly, "the theme ...of initiation and moral education,...of progress through temporary reversion and achieved self-knowledge ,...of man's exploratory descent into the

primitive sources of being"(Wilcox,189),is further suggested by a remark of Conrad's own "The artist descends within himself and in the lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserring and fortunate, he finds the term of his appeal"(Quoted in Wilcox,190).So Conrad's novel becomes a vehicle of exposing criticism to the complacent Victorian ideas of civilized progress; the journey into the interior reveals the savage and the primitive which lies beneath the civilized veneer of European culture.

In this concern,Conrad depicts an insight into the depths of man's evil asserting that when man freed from the fetters of civilization and loosed from the geographical and cultural constraints of civilized world, he will actually degenerate himself and revert into the most savage and barbaric life, and exceed all human limits and become inhuman.

One of the most powerful sources of influence in the production of such belief as Conrad's is Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, which appeared in 1859,and dominated the late nineteenth-century scientific thinking and had a wider and profound influence on literature. According to this evolutionary theory of species,

man has not (as the Bible proposes)been created specially and separately from other animals–nor has woman either. Rather, human kind has descended and evolved from them over aeons of time, in struggle with and adaptation to the environment. Thus an inherent animal nature is accorded to the human, at least in its primal form.

(Fothergill, 81)

Accordingly, all human beings are descended from barbarians and their ancestors were absolutely naked and like animals lived on what they could catch, they had no government, and were merciless to every–

one not of their own small tribe. Thus," he who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins."(Fothergill, 82).it is fairly obvious that the barbarian is the 'other' to the civilized European.

Being attracted by the kinship between the savage and the civilized, Conrad, in *Heart of Darkness*, supports the image of 'savage' as ancestor, and suggests that the qualities which are attributed to the savage are shared by the civilized,who is, for Conrad, nothing more than the primitive dressed up in "pretty rags—rags that would fly off at the first good shake"(*Heart of Darkness*,59).Therefore,looking at the savage ,we can see not only the image of our ancestors but rather the truth of ourselves. In fact, the idea of the savage is inscribed in *Heart of Darkness* to reveal the dark underside of the civilized man. "However mysterious and inscrutable, the savage is not something so utterly alien that it has no connection with the European man. On the contrary, the wilderness mirrors what is present and lurking beneath the skin of civilized people"(Fothergill, 84).

Such idea is specially affirmed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which portrays Kurtz's regressive metamorphosis as an example of "reversion to savagery". Alone in confrontation with wilderness (the jungle),the civilized Kurtz can not resist regression to savagery ;he goes to the Congo people as an "emissary of light" to cultivate the Africans,but he fails bitterly for he can not conquer the savage side of his own nature. Moreover ,"under such circumstances ,regression to savagery can become a powerful temptation...In short there are circumstances under which a man, even a good man, may be hard to put to resist reverting to the beast"

(McClure,132).Hence, Kurtz is reverted into a brute and murderer because of the human nature which, as Darwin thought, consists of a savage and evil underside ,and is fairly revealed when civilization is stripped away.

It is worth mentioning that in *Heart of Darkness* Conrad, succeeds in transforming a tale that on one level of meaning is a travelogue telling of the economic exploitation of the Congo people (he intends his novel to mount a criticism of European Colonialism with its imperialistic impulses towards profit, exploitation, and destruction.)into a story with a profound theme of an initiation into the mysteries of man's own mind and an explanation of the dark powers within his being (Wilcox,189).To attain this theme Conrad uses Marlow's journey into Africa as a spiritual journey into self–discovery. His journey can profoundly be interpreted as a "journey within...that [he] saw his outer adventure as the archetypal embodiment of an inner adventure is clear"(Benson,210).Through this journey, Marlow learns that the darkness lies in the heart of every man and it is only through self–knowledge man can be saved from the dark powers that he has faced within his being (Ibid.).Hence,

The journey is one from a familiar world into an unfamiliar one ,from a world which seems to hold the light of rational understanding to a world of instinctual darkness, a world which only can be grasped by a reason beyond the ordinarily reasonable .

(Tucker, 29)

The opening paragraphs of *Heart of Darkness* introduce explicitly theme of civilization. Before Marlow actually launches into his tale, Conrad presents five men, included Marlow, sitting on board the Nellie in the Thames estuary, and meditating on Britain's past conquerors and

explorers who contributed to the wealth and fame of their country and carried the torch of civilization to the end of earth. They also mention the glorious days of England that stands for a warden of "the sacred fire" of civilization, when the Thames "had borne all ships whose names like jewels flashing in the night of time," (*Heart of Darkness*, 4). But Marlow insists that Britain "also...has been one of the dark places of the earth" (*HD*, 5). He thinks of its dark ages when it was invaded by Romans:

I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day...light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightening in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday.

(*HD*, 5)

In his account of the Roman conquest of Britain, Marlow implies that the corruption is inherent in the very act of imposing civilization on the darkness, and in the motivation necessary for such a formidable task (Benson, 211). The Romans come to Britain as emissary of light, and "the bearers of the sacred fire of civilization", but their light of civilization itself is "like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightening in the clouds". (*HD*, 5). They are transformed into robbers and murderers bringing corruption and violence to Britain, so the Romans:

grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and man going blind.

(*HD*, 7)

Throughout the reference to Roman's conquest, Conrad intends to say that the inevitable tendency of expanding and bringing civilization to the dark places, as the long and bitter exposition of the Belgian civilization of the Congo will show, is toward corruption and brutal

exploitation, and he even call it as "the criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness"(Quoted in Benson,212).It is evident that civilization is something uppermost in human behaviors and whenever he is in confrontation with the wilderness, the dark evil in the heart of every one becomes more apparent and reverts the civilized man into a state of savagery and corruption .Hence, the idealisms and the sentimental pretenses of the emissaries of light are soon uncovered by their savage nature: "principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags–rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No, you want a deliberate belief."(*HD*, 59) asserted Marlow, the narrator and main character in the novel.

Further Conrad discounts civilization which means the conventional conduct and external restraint. He believes that the restraint of civilization is indispensable stays against chaos and even against the destructive knowledge of savagery, of unfettered impulse (Benson, 212).

In fact, of all the European company agents on the Congo, only Marlow comes to the Congo without any intention to dominate its people or exploit its wealth. He wants nothing from the Congo but an opportunity for exploration, a chance to enlarge his mind. Because of his good motives as an ideal explorer he deals with the Africans with a minimum of prejudice (McClure, 135).

Marlow must pass through three stations known as the Outer Central, and Inner Station. These three stations suggest "the Christian station of the Cross, paths of pain and agony that must be traversed to reach a peace and understanding, and a fulfillment of one's appointed

place on earth."(Tucker, 32).Marlow begins his journey in Brussels, where he acquires, through an aunt's aid, a berth on a Belgian steamer which plies its trade on the Congo River.

At the Outer station, Marlow is impressed with a sense of absurdity when he comes on an unused boiler in the jungle, and a railway-truck lying on its back. He is shocked at his first view of African natives: starving, wasted figures; they are chained together with an iron collar on their necks, and can hardly stand upright for lack of strength:

**I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery,
a stack of rusty rails...I blinked, the path was steep.
a horn tooted to the right ,and I saw the black people
run. A heavy and dull detonation shock the ground, a
puff of smoke came out off the cliff, and that was all.
They were building a railway ...six black men advanced
in a file, toiling up a path. They walked erect and
slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads,
and the clink kept time with their footsteps....each
had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected
together with a chain whose bright swung between them.**
(*HD*, 24-25)

In addition, he finds that the remarkable features of the company station are disorder, waste, and exploitation of the natives, and also discovers that the bringers of light, who face the darkness of the wilderness, are themselves agents of darkness. But the:

**the victims of colonialism are not just the natives
who are enslaved and the physical environment
that is ravaged ,but the victims, too, those who are
the white instruments of empire building. Like a
destructive machine, once set in a action, it owes no
more allegiance to its creator and agents than to its
most victims ...the colonial machine doesn't seem to
care for anything but material gain.**

(Fothergill, 42)

Marlow meets the company's chief accountant at the station, whom Marlow sincerely admires and respects for what he has accomplished; the preservation of his impeccable appearance and the perfect keeping of his books in the midst of the surrounding confusion and moral chaos create a certain of irony that the darkness of the "inferno" at the Outer Station is the reality the whites have brought with them ,and the light of civilization subsists only in appearances like in the light attire of this accountant and his devotion to the outer forms rather than the values of civilization:

The thin mantle of civilization covering this man's inhumanity is symbolized by the white and brilliant perfection of his dress ,which is juxtaposed to the devastation of the station and the misery of the black men who creep out in the gloom of the trees. It is also symbolized by the condition of his books, which were in "apple-pie order"...He was sensitive only to the amenities of the civilization of which he was a part and was conscious of the sufferings of the natives only when their noise disturbed his concentration on his books. Thus, he exhibited no sympathy for the dying man who was brought to the station and placed outside his window. In his strict adherence to the superficialities of his culture he was isolated from the rest of mankind; his humanity had been forgotten in the process of keeping an appearance in the great demoralization of the land.

(Dowden,Quoted in Wilcox, 94)

The accountant is the first man to mention Kurtz to Marlow, praising the agent as a first-class man, remarkable who sends more ivory than all others combined.From this moment the character of Kurtz begins to work on Marlow's imagination, but Marlow will have to wait many

months before he can meet the great man .He leaves the station with a caravan of sixty men to march hundred miles to the next station. On the fifteen day, the caravan arrives at the Central Station, which seems more desolate than the other, surrounded by scrub forest and mud. It is characterized by sheer dullness and lack of intelligence; no activity is going on, not even waste and exploitation (Solibakke, 84).The station is a place of waste, cruelty, greed, and dullness and is full aimless men wandering in circles, waiting for the ship, which has sunk, to be repaired, and thinking of ivory that they have made a good of it. Marlow refers to these white men as pilgrims:

I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of yard. I asked myself sometimes what it all meant. They wandered here and there with their absurd long stares in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence.The word "ivory" rang in the air,was whispered, was sighed .You would think they were praying to it.

(HD, 23)

Marlow also becomes acquainted with the manager of the station, and the manager's uncle. Marlow's interest in Kurtz is considerably awakened by the conversation between the manager and his uncle who are talking about Kurtz and both hope that the jungle, which kills off so many people, will also remove him from the manager's way to success. They feel jealous of Kurtz for he is so powerful that he can manipulate the company and administration, and he, thus, stands for an obstacle to their selfish aims as traders of ivory. Marlow criticizes bitterly the members of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and describes them sardonically:

This devoted band called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition and I believe they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was

the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage ...To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into safe who paid the expenses of the noble enterprise I don't know ;but the uncle of our manager was leader of that lot.

(*HD*, 31)

Moreover, Kurtz occupies Marlow's mind as of one the company agents describes him as:"He is a prodigy He is an emissary of pity, and science and progress, and devil knows what else "(*HD*, 35).

At this stage it is clear that the main source of temptation for the white man is ivory. Unlike them, Marlow is not tempted by ivory because his intentions are to explore and "discover his own true stuff in confrontation with the inscrutable 'other'—the mysterious, impenetrable jungle" (Fothergill,69).He is greatly impressed by the silent powerfulness of the primeval forest which presents itself as an enigma to him .Though Marlow does not know yet what he will find in the heart of darkness ,where the civilized men are tempted to yield to their lower instincts, but he senses that an inner truth is hidden in both nature and men. He asserts that in order to face that truth man needs an "inborn strength" and a "deliberate belief", whichby he can defeat the evil in his own heart. Marlow further believes that "the mind of man is capable of everything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future "(*HD*, 37).

Marlow finally sails on the ship to the Inner Station with the manager on board. He describes the atmosphere prevailing on the river in the vicinity of the Inner Station : " Going up that river was like traveling

back to the earliest beginning of the world ...we were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance"(*HD*, 36). In this concern, Conrad associates the darkness of the jungle with the evil in the heart of man, and insists on the identity of this jungle with the primeval in nature.

Thus, Marlow has reached the point in his journey backward where man faces the dark universe alone; having lost the painfully wrought outer defenses of civilization which seems unreality and illusion in this place. In this concern, Conrad presents Kurtz, who has submitted himself absolutely to the jungle, as the ultimate test–case of civilization and humanity. Conrad further asserts that Kurtz can triumph not by principles but by having an essential human capacity which is termed in *Heart of Darkness* as "restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience fear–or some kind of primitive honor?"(*HD*,42).By emphasizing this point, Conrad suggests that when man is released from the protective custody of his own society ,he will personally deteriorate into a mere savage with unbounded lusts for power and for wealth, because of the lack of social checks against delusions of grandeur and arbitrary actions.

You can't understand.How could you? with solid pavement your feet; surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer you or to fall on you, steeping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums–how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude–utter solitude without policemen –utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbor can

be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall on your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness. Of course you may be too much of a fool to go wrong –too dull even to know you are being assaulted by the powers of darkness.

(*HD*, 50)

These words draw a contrast between the white conditions in Europe and his conditions in Africa. In his own environment the white man is protected from his own worst instincts by the butcher, who satisfied his appetite; and his fear of the policeman and of public opinion keeps him on the straight path. When he is deprived of these supports in the utter solitude of the jungle , man must draw upon his own "innate strength" and "his capacity for faithfulness" which Marlow so much praises as means of resisting the wilderness and helping man to over come the evil which is inherent in his own human nature .

Furthermore, the responsibility for the degeneration and reversion of the civilized man falls, as Conrad thinks, on the society itself for it:

legitimates avarice and domination instead of instilling in men a clear conviction that these are dangerous a petites in need of constant surveillance .And so Kurtz ,convinced of his own benevolence ,comes to the Congo to grow wealthy and to play the role of god–the –giver– of –light to the ignorant blacks .His appetites and his delusions carry him beyond the last flimsy external restraints ,and he discovers the true shape of his personality ,the true names for his motives.

(McClure, 137)

For Marlow, the desire to reach Kurtz becomes a passion .To have missed him would have been as if Marlow had "been robbed off a belief or had missed my destiny in life" (*HD*, 49).He seems so anxious to encounter his double or subconscious who will drive him to discover himself and attain self- knowledge. "I was then rather excited at the prospect of meeting Kurtz very soon... where the pilgrims imagined [the steam boat] crawled to I don't know...for me it crawled towards Kurtz- exclusively" (*HD*, 66- 67).

"The wilderness had patted him on the head ...it had caressed him, and withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh ,and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation."(*HD*, 49) In the light of this view, Marlow presents Kurtz's reversion as a case of temptation and fall, and the African, who are identified with wilderness, as devils .Accordingly, Marlow, thinks that the African must bear some responsibility for Kurtz's reversion to brutalization. But it seems that Kurtz's aggressiveness and lust for power are qualities deeply rotted in his own nature, and he uses them to compel the Africans' submission. He appears to them like the God of the Old Testament (McClure, 140),"with thunder and lightning, you know-and they had never seen anything like it -and very terrible" (*HD*,57). Thus, Kurtz sees himself as a great man, and the natives had made a god of him and he looks upon himself in that light too.His conviction of being superior man and his lust for power derive him to behave like a god and to arrogate to himself the right to destroy all these who are different from himself (McClure,141).

Actually, "the wilderness...had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till

he took counsel with this great solitude—it echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core"(*HD*, 59).According to reversion theory, Kurtz possesses the evil forces already as part of his personality, but is ignorant of their existence until the wilderness enlightens him and exhibits those forces publicly.(McCclure,140).Though he is sent to the Congo people as an emissary of light, sympathy, and progress, as the embodiment of the highest ideals of the imperial mission; he is rather reverted, by his lustful impulses, into a mere brute and savage one. Marlow himself assures that in the solitude of the jungle, Kurtz has been consumed by the wilderness outside and within himself. "He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land "(*HD*, 49).He organize an army and takes what he wants by force. Every thing in the jungle belongs to him. "His mother was half–English, his father was half–French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz"(*HD*,50).He had been asked by the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs to write a report for its guidance , and in his accustomed eloquence and noble words he has written seventeen pages on how to bring civilization to the black savage masses. Later he has added in pencil to the last page: "Exterminate All the Brutes", which reveals a realization of the insufficiency of his total commitment to himself and of the validity of the standards and norms which condemn him.

It is worth mentioning that Kurtz fails so horribly because he has no 'inborn strength', no "capacity for faithfulness" which are termed by Marlow as "restraint":

Mr. Kurtz lacked restrain in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him some– small matter which, when the press need a rose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence .Whether he knew of this deficiency himself. I can't say. I think the knowledge came

to him at last—only at the very last.

(*HD*, 59)

While observing the potential depths of evil in the heart of Kurtz, Marlow is amazed at the restraint in the cannibals that keeps them from eating the pilgrims. Although the cannibals attack the boat, he considers their action as a protective one, and suggests that the whites are guilty of an uncontrolled desire for material things (ivory) which are cannibalistic in nature. At the same time, Marlow shows a considerable admiration for the accountant who is dressed amidst moral and physical chaos, and keeping his books in apple—pie order. He stands for a symbol of restraint which Kurtz lacks (Thale, 180). Thus, it could be said that the major theme of *Heart of Darkness* is that:

**only by self—doubt and self—restraints can man
preserve his integrity and act ethically. Marlow,
recognizing the presence in his heart of dangerous
and evil impulses, resists the temptations of the
Congo. Kurtz, who deifies himself and lacks
restraint, succumbs eagerly and is destroyed.**

(McClure, 147)

The first person Marlow meets at the Inner Station is the "harlequin", a Russian employee of the company, who is fiercely loyal to Kurtz. Marlow calls him the "harlequin" because "his clothes had been made off some stuff that was brown holland probably, but it was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow...A beardless, boyish face, very fair,...little blue eyes" (*HD*, 53). He seems to have much in common with the fool who appears in all literary traditions, like Renaissance English drama. The harlequin is fascinated by Kurtz, and expresses the greatest admiration for him because Kurtz "made me see things —things" (*HD*, 56). But Marlow sees his devotion to

Kurtz as blind and morally naive: "I did not envy his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism" (*HD*, Ibid.)

The Russian trader relates to Marlow his knowledge of Kurtz, who raided the country for ivory with the help of a tribe of armed followers who adored him. Despite this fact, he does not regard Kurtz a savage; quite the opposite, for, as a man of eloquence and beautiful words, Kurtz has broadened this young man's horizons by talking with him of noble things. So even after Kurtz's outburst of vile greed, the Russian does not flee, but waits for him to become friendly again; then actually nurses him through two illnesses.

When Marlow sees that the ornamental poles around Kurtz's house are topped with human heads, eyes closed, smiling, he realizes the extent of Kurtz's reversion and lack of restraint. Before he meets him, Marlow admires Kurtz's humanitarianism and romantic ideals; but this image of Kurtz suddenly collapses when Marlow sees the shrunken heads on poles. "Those heads dying on the stakes under Mr. Kurtz's windows...were the heads of rebels. There had been enemies, criminals, workers... Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks" (*HD*, 59)

At this moment, Kurtz himself appears carried on a stretcher. Marlow has the first glimpse of the mysterious man whom all Europe contributed to make. He looks like "an animated image of death, carved out of old ivory...I saw him open his mouth wide. It gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, and all the men before him." (*HD*, 61) These words reflect Kurtz's rapacious lust for power and wealth, and make him as a cannibal gone mad, one whose appetite is beyond restraint and satisfaction

both(McClure,142).Through the portrayal of Kurtz's character, Conrad sees the imperial mission of bringing civilization to Africa as a means of exploitation and domination, and further suggests that:

his European characters acquire their lusts for wealth and power in Europe,... Then they come to the colonial world in search of freedom that will allow these lusts to be expressed. They find it, and the sudden social decompression causes them to 'blow up' emotionally. Their ability to dominate another people causes their egos to inflate grotesquely ,until they see themselves as gods... as gods the Europeans no longer feel bound by human moral codes, no do they see their domination of the Africans as unnatural... Kurtz, thus, resembles a certain kind of nouveou riche

(McClure,143)

Significantly, Marlow has found out that there is a discrepancy between Kurtz's very real idealism and his savage actions, and he has no moral and psychological restraints which enable him to resist the temptation, corruptions, and the excesses of the wilderness. "The forces that brutalize the European colonial thrive at the heart of European civilization, which cultivates and encourages them." (McClure, 143).

Marlow informs Kurtz that he has been sent to bring him back to Europe on the orders of the Belgian company which employs both of them. That night, Kurtz, though so ill with fever, creeps out of his tent, and crawls along the ground to participate in a pagan ceremony outside his camp. It is the last rite in which Kurtz will participate, for he dies soon after being aboard Marlow's ship. This behavior reflects Kurtz total surrender to his baser instincts, and his complete reversion to a barbaric and savage person. In addition, it makes Marlow feel that the spell of the wilderness draws him to " its pitiless breast by the awakening of the forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous

passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires," (*HD*, 67). Therefore, the wilderness takes part in transforming Kurtz's soul into a "... mad. Being alone in the wilderness it [Kurtz's soul] had looked within itself, and...it had gone mad...He struggled within himself...I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself." (*HD*, 68)

As death approaches, the evil core of Kurtz seems to take over his features and he comes to look like what he is, an "expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror –of an intense and hopeless despair." (*HD*, 71) Kurtz's last moment is one of complete knowledge and his last words "The horror! The horror " are interpreted by Marlow as "judgment upon the adventures of his soul on this earth" (*Ibid.*).

According to Marlow ,Kurtz's cry signifies "more than self knowledge ,more than an insight into the depths of his own evil; it is an insight into the potentialities in all men, and a terrible illumination ,for in Kurtz Marlow discovers not simply one man become evil, but a universal possibility." (Thale, 179) Whatever the truth Kurtz has glimpsed, Marlow sees its perception as a 'moral victory' and keeps thinking of him as a "remarkable man" (*HD*,72) and a god in his satanic rites.

It is essentially to mention that the experience at the Inner Station transforms Marlow utterly because the memory of Kurtz charges his view of the universe .When Marlow is back in England, he is struck by the blindness and folly of the people walking down the streets un aware of the challenge and the danger. Marlow scorns them because in the quest for Kurtz he has discovered the dreadful burden of human freedom:

"They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because ...they could not know the things I knew. Their bearing ...was offensive to me like the outrageous flaunting of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend " (*HD*, 72).

Moreover, Marlow visits Kurtz's Intended who is as much a shade as Kurtz is. Indeed, Conrad calls her by that name for she stands for the intention, the unchanging, absolute idealism men can not live up to. She believes in Kurtz's greatness and self-sacrifice, and that Kurtz continued to try to bring light and morality to primitive and dark Africa. So she has sacrificed all that is living in order to believe in Kurtz .Even Marlow refers to her such as "thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds" (*HD*,76).In fact ,she clearly compels Marlow into telling her what she wants to hear; and this shows that she is self-deceived woman ,who sacrifices her life to a dead ideal. Marlow chooses not to dispel the illusion of her, partly because of his loyalty to Kurtz, and partly because the futility of telling the truth to a woman who, because of her unwillingness to face life, has become a shade. Thus, when she asks Marlow for Kurtz's last words; instead of repeating Kurtz's remark, "The horror", he says that the last word Kurtz uttered was her name. "It would have been too dark-too dark altogether telling her the truth" (*HD*,77).Marlow concludes that the truth would only have plunged her into needless disillusionment and pain.

Finally, it could be said that through Kurtz's experience, Marlow has had his illumination, and he, too, undergoes a transformation in the Congo for:

he learns wisdom at price. He owes a debt to Kurtz,

for Kurtz has been man enough to face the hell within him. Unlike the agents who turn away from the challenge of hell, Kurtz has gone all too far in his weird exploration. Through Kurtz's failure, Marlow learns about his own capacity for evil and his capacity to resist it. He realizes that without involvements there is no restraint,... the reward of his victory over the elements of hell is his knowledge of human limitation; thus, while repudiating Kurtz, he remains loyal to him. In this loyalty, there is an acknowledgement of the hell within, to be met and conquered again and again by every man.

(Feder, 184)

Bibliography

- Benson, Donald R. "Heart of Darkness: The Grounds of Civilization in an Alien Universe "in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*. ed. Robert Kimbrough .London :University of Wisconsin,1971.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* with Backgrounds and Sources Criticism .ed. Robert Kimbrough .London: University of Wisconsin, 1971.
- Feder, Lillian. "Marlow's Descent into Hell." in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness'*. Ed.Robert Kimbrough .London: University of Wisconsin, 1971.

- Fothergill, Anthony. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. Milton Keynes– Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1989.
- Jelinek,Hena.*Heart of Darkness*:York Notes .England:
Longman & York Press, 1982.
- McClure, John A. *Kipling& Conrad: The Colonial Fiction*.
England: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Solibakke, Eric J. *Conrad's Lord Jim, and Heart of Darkness, the Secret Sharer* .New Delhi: Kaushalya , 1966.
- Thale, Jerome. "Marlow's Quest" in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*. ed. Robert Kimbrough .London :University of Wisconsin,1971.
- Tucker Martin. *Joseph Conrad*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1983.
- Wilcox, Stewart C. "Conrad's Complicated Presentation of Symbolic Imagery" in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*. ed. Robert Kimbrough .London :University of Wisconsin,1971.