



# *Heart of Darkness*

## *Marlow's Story*

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*Whatever values in the visible world are destroyed by modern relativism, the psyche will produce their equivalents. At first we cannot see beyond the path that leads downward to dark and hateful things - but no light or beauty will ever come from the man who cannot bear this sight. Light is always born of darkness, and the sun never yet stood still in heaven to satisfy man's longing or to still his fears.*

Carl Gustav Jung in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*

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## Chapter I. Introduction

### The issue under consideration

*Heart of Darkness* is a literary work that has been interpreted in many ways and has elicited a lot of discussion both around its narrative structure and its plot. As the famous Conrad scholar Cedric Watts notes, *Heart of Darkness* “can be related to a diversity of traditions such as political satire, protest literature, traveller’s tale, psychological odyssey, symbolic novel, and mediated autobiography” (xviii)<sup>1</sup>. What is it that makes a rather simple plot engender so much interest and interpretation? What is really Marlow talking about? He describes events that he encounters and he tells about the thoughts these events elicit in him. In addition to his description of events and thoughts Marlow gives a fascinating description of the African nature a vivid description of something alive, powerful and mysterious<sup>2</sup>.

Marlow’s description of the “wilderness” he encounters brings Jung’s archetypes, the ancient images that lie in the depths of the human psyche strikingly to mind. These images are common for all human beings; they are images of our own primitive nature of past times that we all share in our collective unconscious and they often appear in dreams or in dreamlike fantasy. Marlow’s story makes an impact on the reader because the reader responds to the images he describes. My argument is that in describing his experiences, Marlow actually uses images from our collective unconscious to describe significant psychological processes that he goes through. I intend to interpret Marlow’s story from a psychological point of view because I think that some of the concepts of Jung’s theory throw a light upon Marlow’s experience as he describes it. In addition to Jung’s theory, I am going to use other sources that

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<sup>1</sup> References in parenthesis refer to the text of *Heart of Darkness* and Explanatory Notes from the Oxford World’s Classics edition with an Introduction by Cedric Watts.

<sup>2</sup> The pronouns he/his are used in reference to “man” or to a human being in general.

explain and/or comment the novella's narrative technique and plot. This discussion does not exclude other points of view or interpretations from different angles. In order to present Marlow's experience in Jungian terms it is necessary to present a summary of the concepts of Jung's analytical psychology that are going to be used in this thesis.

One characteristic of the tale's narrative is the use of two narrators, a first-person narrator who has experienced the events narrated and another, also first-person narrator unknown to the reader. The unknown frame narrator intervenes, comments the events and/or the narrative situation and relates the first-narrator's story to the reader. This kind of narrative method accentuates and strengthens this extra ordinary novella. The following examples of contemporary response to Conrad's work show that it was immediately understood as a very interesting text both because its plot and its narrative technique. The relevance of these earlier responses becomes clear when later criticism of the novella expresses similar points of view.

In an *Unsigned Review* from the *Athenaeum* (1902) the reviewer warns the reader that *Heart of Darkness* "cannot be read understandingly ... with one mental eye closed and the other roving" (2006: 312) because the author demands from his readers much thoughtful attention. Considering the work from another point of view, John Masefield in *From the Speaker* (1903) remarks that the narrative "reminds one rather of a cobweb abounding in gold threads. It gives one a curious impression of remoteness and aloofness from its subject" (Masefield 2006: 313).

## **Joseph Conrad**

Born in Poland in 1857, he started his career as a sailor in France and later joined the British merchant navy. In 1886 he obtained his Master's Certificate, and on the same year he became a British citizen. Conrad started writing in the early 1890s,

the time he settled permanently in England. His major works include *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1898), *Tales of Unrest* (1898), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Youth* (1902), *Nostromo* (1904), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), *Chance* (1913). Among his best known works is the novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899): a complex, compact story, which is one of the most widely discussed works of English literature.

In much of his work Conrad expresses his scepticism about imperialism. For example, "An Outpost of Progress" (*Cosmopolis*, June and July 1897) is set in Central Africa and presents "a ruthlessly ironic view of European colonialism and the pretension of civilization" (xi). Confrontations between the inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago and European traders appear again in "Karain" (*Blackwood's* November 1897). The narrative structure of "Karain" is that of "the tale within the tale". This narrative mode is fully developed in *Heart of Darkness*, the plot of which is set in Africa offering an exceptionally ironic view of the European imperialism and trading practices (xi).

According to Watts (xii), a partial explanation of Conrad's scepticism about imperialism is to be found in his Polish upbringing. After experiencing the partition of his home-country between Russia, Prussia and Austria, Conrad had a good reason to question the right of great powers to submit smaller countries to their will. Another answer lies in the fact that Conrad had himself travelled in Africa where he experienced the "rapacity and brutality of Europeans" (xiii) exploiting the Continent.

Criticism of the European civilization appears in "An Outpost of Progress" when the characters, isolated from the conventions and institutions of their 'civilized' world, reveal the hollowness that lies at its core. This theme reappears in *Heart of Darkness* where again the impact of individuals isolated from their social system shows the inability of European civilization to protect its individuals from corruption.

Although Conrad returned to London only six months after his travels in the Congo he was unable to forget what he saw there and this experience, “pushed a little (and only very little)” (Conrad 2006: 290), was to become his most known work, *Heart of Darkness*.

### ***Heart of Darkness***

*Heart of Darkness* is Conrad’s highest achievement in eloquence, subtlety and originality. It was first published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February to April 1899. It is impossible to adequately understand *Heart of Darkness* without examining the narrative strategies employed. Its narrative method links together narrative and thematic structure, creating what Hillis Miller regards as “a parabolic feature of *Heart of Darkness*: the narrative form dramatizes “a “simple” and “realistic” plot but still the actions of the characters appear ambiguous. They provoke the reader’s interpretation as in parable but their ambiguity complicates the reader’s interpretation (Miller (1985) cf. Lothe: 158). The narrative situation of *Heart of Darkness* succeeds in functioning both narratively and thematically: the reader is introduced by a frame narrator to a group of five sailors one of which is going to function both as a first-person narrator and as a character. After the introduction the frame narrator becomes a narratee, as he listens to the main narrator’s story, but he emerges again as a narrator in some parts of the novella and importantly, he also closes the novella.

On taking a close look at the narrative one can distinguish three remarkable journeys in *Heart of Darkness*. First, there is a physical journey, the actual journey up-river which brings Marlow to Kurtz’s Inner Station. Second, there is a journey in space and time, the larger journey that brings Marlow from civilized Europe, “back to

the earliest beginnings of the world” (136), and then back to civilized Europe. The third journey is a psychological one, Kurtz’s journey downwards through the many levels of the self to reach a level where he expresses the unlawful and repressed ambiguities of civilization. “In all three journeys, Conrad’s restless narrative circles back on itself as though trapped in the complexity of the situation” (Caryl Phillips, 2003).

The use of a narrator is a distancing device (Lothe: 168) and the use of two narrators in *Heart of Darkness* indicates Conrad’s need to distance himself from the events he is writing about. This need becomes understandable when one reads Conrad’s statement in his “Author’s Note” that *Heart of Darkness* is “experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case” (Kimbrough 1988: 4, Lothe: 160).

Conrad uses two structural forms in *Heart of Darkness*, a linear structure, Marlow’s journey towards Kurtz and a circular structure: the narrative begins on the Thames, it takes the reader to Brussels, Africa, back to Brussels and ends on the Thames. The novella’s themes refer to problems of politics and psychology, morality and religion, social order and evolution (xviii) and “one of the many paradoxes of *Heart of Darkness* is that this narrative offers eloquent warnings about eloquence, while effectively communicating the difficulty of effective communication” (xix).

J. Hillis Miller, in *Should We Read Heart of Darkness?* (Miller 1996) states that *Heart of Darkness* is not history, autobiography, travel writing, or journalism; it is a literary work (Miller 2006: 465-469). He bases his statement on the fact that the text is characterized by the use of four main devices typical of literary texts. The first characteristic is the two imaginary narrators neither of whom is to be identified with the author. The second characteristic of literature present in *Heart of Darkness* is the

elaborate use of figures and other rhetorical devices that make up the texture of the text. One example is the use of similes, signalled by “like” or “as” which become themselves an undertext beneath the first-level descriptive language. The reader can see whatever the narrators see as a veil hiding something invisible or not yet visible behind it. But in many cases when one veil is lifted it uncovers another behind it; this mode of writing is the mode used in the genre of the apocalypse, the word apocalypse meaning “unveiling” in Greek. Thus, according to Miller, *Heart of Darkness* belongs to the genre of apocalypse; it is “a failed apocalypse” since all apocalypses ultimately fail to lift the last veil. The name of the film, inspired from *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now* “was brilliantly and accurately named, except for that word “now”. Apocalypse is never now. It is always to come, a thing of the future” (Miller 2006: 466). In reading *Heart of Darkness* it seems like that each episode appears like “some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth” (114). The novella is structured as a long series of episodes. Conrad’s remarkable descriptive power makes these episodes appear with extreme vividness before the reader’s imaginary vision. But these episodes vanish and other episodes replace them, giving the impression of a veil lifted just to reveal another veil behind it (Miller 2006: 466).

The third literary characteristic of *Heart of Darkness* is the irony that is obvious throughout the text, although it can be difficult to know how to respond to that irony. There are many examples of irony since often Marlow says one thing and means another thus making irony a central feature of his narrative presentation. One example is the reference to the work of imperialist conquest as the “merry dance of death and trade” and describing the Europeans engaged on it as “pilgrims”.

The fourth literary feature of *Heart of Darkness* is “prosopopoeia”, the personifications which begin already in the title (the darkness has a heart).

“Prosopopeia creates the fiction of a personality where in reality there is none. All prosopopeias are also catachreses” (Miller 2006: 467). There are many examples of prosopopeias in the novella confirming the fact that their use becomes a catachresis. “The wilderness surrounding the Central Station”, says Marlow, “struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion” (125). “Could we handle that dump thing, or would it handle us?” (129). The wilderness destroys Kurtz by a kind of diabolical seduction. (Miller 2006: 467-468).

All these four literary characteristics support the view that *Heart of Darkness* is a literary work and nothing else. This means that the reader should not hold the author responsible for what the characters think and/or say. Thus Miller agrees with Watts in that Conrad is neither a journalist nor a travel writer; he is an author of narrative fiction. I agree in that Conrad is a writer of fiction. Still, as I intend to show with this thesis, his work contains ideas that are worthy of a closer look and interpretation.

### **Criticism of *Heart of Darkness***

*Heart of Darkness* is criticized mostly on three grounds, although the general agreement is that its strengths outweigh its flaws. One flaw “is a tendency to vapidly portentous phrasing, “an adjectival and worse than supererogatory insistence on “unspeakable rites”, “unspeakable secrets”, “monstrous passions”, inconceivable mystery” and so on”. This criticism is reduced by the consideration that it is Marlow the narrator, and not Conrad the author, who shows this “adjectival insistence”. Marlow, who was also stricken by fever, says that he frequently experienced situations that were very difficult to express in words (xx).

A second criticism of *Heart of Darkness* is about the way Conrad presents the Africans. Chinua Achebe asserts that the tale reveals Conrad as “a bloody racist” (xxi). In an interview with Caryl Phillips (2003) he says that he expected better from Conrad because Conrad would have been capable of writing his novella in a different way if he wanted to. Achebe (2003) objects the use of the word “nigger” and it seems to him that Conrad is obsessed with “the physicality of the negro”, rejecting the person behind it.

Furthermore, Achebe finds that *Heart of Darkness* presents Africa as “the antithesis of Europe and therefore to civilization”, and Conrad mocks both the African landscape and the African people, suggesting with his “adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery” that Africa is inexplicable. To the critics who defend *Heart of Darkness* pointing to Conrad’s narrative technique and his anti-imperialistic stance, Achebe answers that if Conrad needed to distance himself from his narrator, he was able to choose another frame of reference if he thought it necessary. By neglecting to do so he indicates that he approves of Marlow’s attitude thus signalling that Marlow represents the author.

However, Achebe does acknowledge Conrad’s ambivalence towards the Europeans’ colonization of Africa and he also acknowledges that the tale shows what happens to Europeans when they become exposed to this form of economic and social exploitation. Yet he is offended by Conrad’s lack of respect of the African people. For Achebe, Conrad uses Africans as a symbol, neglecting the fact of their humanity. Africa is presented “as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognisable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril”.

But as Phillips puts it, Conrad sets against the “humanity” of Europe a late nineteenth-century view of Africa as a primitive world. This view of the “savage”

country lying outside Europe is not surprising for Conrad's readers; on the contrary, it is in accordance with the prevailing view of their time.

Despite Achebe's criticisms, both Phillips and Achebe concur that it was not Conrad who originated this kind of stereotyped image of Africans. Conrad was able to see that the contact between Africans and Europeans uncovered and exposed the weaknesses of European civilization. They further agree that Conrad uses a prevailing stereotype of Africans as a means to expose European fragility, and finally they are both agreed on the disturbing fact that this stereotype is still alive.

I understand very well Achebe's objections to the presentation of Africa and Africans; yet I do not think that the focus of Conrad's story is on the Africans. He wants to present a disturbing aspect of European civilization; his narrative method of presenting the country and the people is meant to strengthen his character's storytelling and not to offend others.

The third criticism is the attack on Conrad by feminist writers who consider Conrad as "a male chauvinist". Nina Pelican Straus argues that "in the tale, a man tells a group of men a story about "men's work" in Africa" (xxv). She points to Marlow's saying about "how out of touch with truth women are" (xxv), and in the novella women are referred to as living in a beautiful world of their own. Marlow lets the Intended retain her illusions about Kurtz; he even lies to her in order to protect her from suffering. Watts remarks that all male activities in the tale are presented satirically and he points out that Conrad in fact postulated female suffrage.

Marlow describes the African woman in the following way:

"She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul" (168).

One notices in this wording that Miller's "it" is female, "a colossal body of fecund and mysterious life" (469). The wilderness is supposed to represent a mysterious knowledge "like evil or truth" as well, and this personification does not fit the assertion of Conrad being a sexist. The description points to the fact that Marlow does not consider women in general as innocent or ignorant or "out of it". Man can distinguish between two contradictory views about women in the novella: "the European male's tendency to personify the earth as a great mother, full of immemorial, seductive wisdom, and the European male's tendency to condescend to women as innately incapable of seeing into things as well as men can" (469).

Despite all criticisms made of the novella, *Heart of Darkness* is a work of art and as a work of art, it is an intentional and consciously shaped product of complicated psychic activities, (Jung: 155) being at the same time something in itself and for itself (Jung: 157). After all, as Watts put it, Conrad earned his living as an entertainer, not as a writer of religious or political tracts (xxvii).

## **The plot**

Lothe gives the following summary of the plot of *Heart of Darkness*:

On board a yawl anchored peacefully on the Thames, the narrator, Marlow, tells the story of his journey on another river. Travelling to Africa to join a cargo boat, he grows disgusted by what he sees of the greed of the ivory traders and their exploitation of the natives. At a company station he hears of the remarkable Mr Kurtz who is stationed in the very heart of the ivory country and is the company's most successful agent. Leaving the river, Marlow makes a long and arduous cross-country trek to join the steamboat which he will command on an ivory-collecting journey into the interior, but at the central station he finds that his boat has been mysteriously wrecked. He learns that Kurtz has dismissed his assistant and is seriously ill. The other agents, jealous of Kurtz's success and possible promotion, hope that he will not recover and it becomes clear that Marlow's arrival at the inner station is deliberately delayed. With repairs fully completed Marlow sets off on the two-month journey towards Kurtz. The river passage through the heavy motionless forest fills Marlow with a growing sense of dread. The journey is "like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (136). Ominous

drumming is heard and dark forms glimpsed among the trees. Nearing its destination the boat is attacked by tribesmen and a helmsman is killed. At the Inner Station Marlow is met by a naïve Russian sailor who tells him of Kurtz's brilliance and the semi-divine power he exercises over the natives. A row of severed heads on stakes round the hut give an intimation of the barbaric rites by which Kurtz has achieved his ascendancy. Ritual dancing has been followed with human sacrifice and, without the restraints imposed by his society, Kurtz, an educated and civilized man, has used his knowledge and his gun to reign over this dark kingdom. While Marlow attempts to get Kurtz back down the river Kurtz tries to justify his actions and his motives: he has seen into the very heart of things. But, dying, his last words are: "The horror! The horror!" (178). Marlow is left with two packages to deliver, Kurtz's report for the Society for Suppression of Savage Customs, and some letters for his Intended. Faced with the girl's grief Marlow tells her that "the last word he pronounced was – your name" (186) (Lothe: 165-166).

### **Theoretical basis for the story**

In order to follow the connection between Marlow's story and Jung's theory it is necessary to identify and briefly consider the concepts of analytical psychology that seem to explain Marlow's storytelling as he presents it. The focus is on the thoughts that are described in the narrative and these thoughts can be posed in terms of the analytical psychology. The terms used here are the collective unconscious, the shadow, and the four stages of psychological development. Other concepts of Jung's theory that are also relevant to the issue under discussion are mentioned as well. I will now give a presentation of selected aspects of Jung's theory that explain the processes Marlow goes through.

The term "collective unconscious" refers to an unconscious psychic activity which is present in all human beings; this activity results in symbolic pictures that are present not only in contemporary man but have been with man since earliest times. In the narrative fabric of *Heart of Darkness* these pictures are present in Marlow's description of the African jungle and in the frame narrator's and Marlow's connection between the present situation (the Thames) and the past (the Thames in earlier times and the Romans).

With these pictures the psyche uncovers a region outside consciousness; a vast realm of psychic life the origins of which are to be found in man's primitive past. In this way the psyche attempts to reconcile the past with present-day consciousness because the primitive past can actually bring up contents that do not always fit into the life of the conscious mind, thus disturbing man's consciousness.

Among the contents of the collective unconscious is the image of the archaic (primal, original) man. Every civilized human being of today is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche and although man is civilized and believes himself to be so, he still shows archaic processes as well. The archaic man is present in the novella in the image of the African and his treatment reveals the way in which the Western man treats the archaic man within.

It is easier to observe the evolutionary stages of the human psyche in the dream than in consciousness because the dream speaks in images and in this way it gives expression to instincts that are derived from the most primitive levels of nature. A dream is often the utterance of the unconscious. It reveals the true picture of an individual's subjective state because it brings up parts of the human experience that are difficult to understand and accept. The conscious mind often denies the existence of this state. Alternatively, it recognizes it only partially, thus giving rise to an involuntary psychic process that goes beyond the control of the conscious mind. The dream becomes then the expression of this psychic process. The language of the dream is symbols and these are relatively fixed symbols that help us to determine the structure of the unconscious. The aim of these symbols is to present something that is unknown and hard to recognize. To understand the meaning of symbols one has to look at how they relate to the conscious situation.

In some parts of his story Marlow describes his impressions as dream-like or as expressions of something that is difficult to name accurately. In a manner reminiscent of dreams, events and feelings appear in their true nature without rationalization or denial, thus becoming difficult to understand. The reader also experiences the narrative as given in a way that is characteristic of dream sensations. Marlow's descriptions of the African nature go beyond a description of mere sensory perception. Conrad speaks in images throughout *Heart of Darkness* and these images influence his readers as they touch upon something that is already known in the depths of themselves.

Consciousness is “the daylight realm of the human psyche” and the unconscious is “the nocturnal realm” of “psychic activity” (Jung: 11). While consciousness is characterized by concentration, limitation and exclusion, the unconscious psyche is rich in contents and living forms. It is possible for man to come in touch with his unconscious mind but he can only apprehend its contents as dreamlike fantasy. The unconscious is something natural and neutral but it can become dangerous when it is denied and the danger becomes even greater when we repress whatever threatens our understanding of our world and ourselves. The relation between consciousness and the unconscious is compensatory: when a process goes too far it causes a compensatory activity because the human psyche is a self-regulating system that seeks to maintain itself in equilibrium. Dominance of rational thinking and rational behaviour under certain conditions can bring forth irrational thinking and irrational behaviour; in the text the ‘rational’ Europeans repeatedly act in ways that are not consistent with the demands of their civilization. This fact appears to be rejected by their conscious mind and is suppressed into the unconscious as they

are seemingly unaware of the inconsistency between their actions and their social values.

Suppressing whatever is not approved by our consciousness can cause a dissociation of the personality and this state is typically marked by anxiety. In order to avoid this problem, man has to come in touch with his unconscious mind and try to understand and assimilate its contents. In doing so man comes to a renewed understanding of himself. Once he has discovered the cause of his problems, the source of his anxiety, and has seen them in the light of his conscious mind, then he may be able to handle them in a more adequate manner.

This work, usually undertaken by the co-operation between a patient and a therapist, is a great challenge for the individual because the process reveals parts of himself that were previously denied and rejected. It reveals the fact that, in spite of his certainty of knowing himself, man possesses traits that threaten his image of himself and for this reason he is unwilling to accept them. A process of successive assimilation of these unconscious contents results in what Jung calls “the widening of consciousness”: the process of bringing together conscious and unconscious parts, understanding them and learning to live in harmony with both. This is what Marlow is called upon; he experiences the workings of the conscious man and, as he understands that he also is a part of it, he tries to suppress his understanding. Since it is difficult to do so, Marlow experiences also the result of this denial; an overwhelming of the unconscious that is culminated in his confrontation with the image of Kurtz, who represents his dark side, the shadow, of the conscious Western man.

Analytical psychology sums its results under the four stages of psychotherapeutic treatment: confession, explanation, education, and transformation.

As soon as man became able to perceive the idea of sin, he also became able to conceal it from awareness and in this way he gave himself to repression. What has been repressed is a secret and, according to Jung, secrets act like a psychic poison. Although small doses of the poison can help an individual to differentiate himself from the community, a large dose alienates one from the community. Marlow admits a lack of contact between him and the whites in Africa, thus revealing his dissociation from the community. But if we repress something, as Marlow does, it splits off from consciousness and moves to the unconscious where it exists as an autonomous complex with a life of its own and can appear as spontaneous psychic activity in dreams and fantasy.

To withhold emotion means also to conceal something from others and from ourselves. Emotions that are withheld often isolate and disturb us in the same way as unconscious secrets do, because these emotions become a burden of guilt as well. Having secrets and withholding emotions often result in sickness because nature does not approve of our attempts to protect ourselves by keeping to ourselves all that we see as dark, imperfect, and guilty in our fellow-beings. Confessing that we are doing this and admitting that the traits we see on others are also to be found in ourselves, we can come in touch with the hinterlands of our mind and experience catharsis.

Catharsis does not solve all problems and this relative failure prompts the need for an explanation. Although insight and explanation can be helpful to persons who are morally sensitive and capable of drawing their own moral conclusions, less sensitive persons need to go to the next step of psychological development, the stage of education. The final stage, the stage of transformation, serves to meet the need to become a normally adapted social being. The notion of a “normal being” suggests a restriction to the average, and the same is true for adaptation. But there are people

who do not want or cannot be 'normal' because having abilities above average being normal for them means a restriction that leads to boredom and infernal sterility.

Following Marlow's narrative, we can see that his first experiences in Africa make him realize that his fellow Europeans commit actions he disapproves of, and this disapproval becomes a burden that cannot be shared with anyone. Kurtz appears as the 'therapist' to whom Marlow can talk. He hopes that Kurtz can help him to understand the activities in Africa. But Kurtz proves unable to assist Marlow in his search for a rational explanation of the activities in which Kurtz, and to some extent Marlow are involved.

Man's (and Marlow's) intuition that he consists of two persons who are in opposition to one another drives him to war with himself because it is very difficult to accept the idea of man's shadow-side; in doing so one must acknowledge and accept the fact that human beings *are* unreasonable and evil as well. But man cannot change anything unless he accepts it. Man must be confronted with the contents of his unconscious mind and the fact of his own duality and he must try to assimilate them in order to bring both sides of his personality in harmony to each other. It is not a choice of "this or that" but a choice of "this *and* that" (Jung: 21).

According to Jung, the problems of civilized man spring from his consciousness because consciousness has destroyed the metaphysical certainties of the medieval man and replaced them with the ideals of materialism. The growth of consciousness in man made him turn away from instinct and replace it by reflections, doubts and experiments. But since the workings of consciousness are almost foreign to the unconscious, this process results in a distinction between them, causing the dissociation of the personality. This discordance between the conscious- and the unconscious psychic life results in need and distress: defence-mechanisms appear in

order to protect the individual from the power of the unconscious. These mechanisms are presented in fantasy by helpful images that exist and have always existed in the human psyche and it is in fact these archetypes that “come to independent life and serve as spiritual guides for the personality, thus supplanting the inadequate ego with its futile willing and striving” (Jung: 247).

As this thesis aims to show, Marlow comes in contact with contents of the unconscious and with the shadow-side of civilized man and thus his own; this contact becomes too strong and elicits a series of psychological processes that are similar to the kind of process described in Jung’s theory. Marlow goes through the stages of psychological development: confession, explanation, education and transformation. This interpretation of the novella, which is only one of many others, shows Conrad’s remarkable sensitivity and great understanding of human nature. Hopefully, it also shows Conrad’s ability, as an author of fiction, to transfer this insight to his readers.

## **Methodology**

The method of this thesis is based on a close reading of the text and its division into chapters. The chapters correspond roughly to important incidents with the related images of nature and the thoughts they elicit in Marlow and are: The narrative situation. The Romans. The Western world. The first visit to the sepulchral city. The journey to Africa. The archaic man. The company station. The grove of death. The company’s chief accountant. Leaving the Station. The people at the central station. Mephistopheles. Nature. The Ego. Kurtz. Travelling. The crew. The attack. Words. The wilderness. The social life of the West. A further acquaintance with Kurtz. The Russian. Meeting Kurtz. The struggle. Kurtz’s death. Back to the Sepulchral City. The end. These chapters are going to be grouped again under the

final division in the: Chapter I Introduction, Chapter II The Opening, Chapter III The Breaking Down of the Conscious World, Chapter IV The Shadow, and Chapter V Conclusion.

I have made this division because I find it helpful in working with a highly compact and rich text. The aim of each part is to isolate an incident, find the corresponding image(s) and thought(s) and relate it (them) to Jung's theory. The central focus of this discussion is Marlow and his narration in his own words. I have therefore chosen to follow the events as they are unfolded, using and referring the reader to citations from the primary text.

As it hopefully becomes clear, Marlow is not only the key character in Conrad's novella; he is also the main focus of this discussion. He appeared first as a narrator in *Youth* and reappeared in *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. As a character, he is a civilized, philosophically minded and much-travelled Englishman (xv) and he functions as Conrad's "surrogate author" because the ideas expressed could be ascribed to him and not to Conrad. Conrad himself has stated that: "Of all my people he's the one that has never been a vexation to my spirit. A most discreet, understanding man" (xv-xvi). Marlow was to become the fullest, more sophisticated, and most convincing character in the whole of Conrad's literary work (xvi).

The first narrator has already described Marlow as a man having "sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect" (103). A further description presents Marlow as a man who "did not represent his class" and being "a wanderer too" (105). Marlow himself says that before he got "there" he had travelled a lot and then returned to London where he was "loafing about" (108). He "did get tired of resting", tried to find a job but he "got tired of that game too" (108).

We understand that Marlow is not a very young man. He has probably reached an age that demands that he settles down, or at least that he slows his pace and/or changes his way of life. Marlow's fascination with new places that looked as "a blank space of delightful mystery" (108) on a map and his seeking for a "fresh departure" (108) seem to indicate a seeking person, one "whose attitude is essentially spiritual" (Jung: 61) and not materialistic. He is responsive to the images of greatness in nature and he seems sensitive to the cruelty and brutality he encounters. He responds to what is happening around him and these incidents evoke thoughts about the nature of man and of Marlow himself.

The events in Africa spark off a process which Marlow experiences as the breaking down of his world. He experiences what the white man is capable of and this recognition, with the emotions connected to it, necessitates his confession. But he cannot find anyone he can talk to because there is none who seems to understand the situation in the way Marlow does. Marlow's lack of contact with the other agents makes him turn to Kurtz, believing misguidedly that Kurtz, being a remarkable and eloquent man, could understand him and offer an explanation.

On his way to Kurtz Marlow encounters the archaic man who proves to be helpful to him; approaching and meeting Kurtz makes Marlow feel as being in contact with the personification of man's shadow-side. Marlow acknowledges what the human personality is capable of, and he is shocked by the inability of Western civilization to sustain itself outside its context. Even more shocking is the discovery that Marlow as a human being he has a dark side too, and as a European he is a part of what appals and shocks him. The journey leaves Marlow physically and psychologically exhausted.

I will show that what Marlow comes in contact with is the contents of the unconscious and the dark side of man (including his own). Appalled by what he experiences, he questions the ideals, beliefs and actions of the Western civilization of which he is a part. In a way his 'world' collapses without being replaced by something else; at the same time Marlow is unable to share his experience with some other person. He seems to go through the four stages of psychic development all alone, a task that taxes his powers and partly explains his state of mind when he returns to Brussels. In the end Marlow chooses (?) to work on the Thames.

I want to consider in some detail what Marlow sees and experiences and how this affects him. In doing so I want to use Marlow's own description of the situation and the thoughts it evokes in him. Marlow often turns to nature when he describes an event connecting in this way the images of nature to the situation. I am going to use Jung's analytical psychology as a support text to Marlow's story because I think that Jung's theory often throws a light upon Marlow's words. In treating the issue in question other points of view will be mentioned as well.

### **Thesis outline**

Part I contains the description of the narrative situation, Marlow's effort to obtain a job in Africa, his physical journey to Africa and his staying at the Company's Station. Part II describes Marlow's first encounter with African nature, his description of the people at the Central Station and the beginning of his journey towards Kurtz's Inner Station. This part is both a physical journey and the beginning of a journey within. In part III Marlow meets Kurtz at last; most of part III is about Marlow's thoughts and feelings about Kurtz and also about their actual meeting. The physical journey back to Europe and the closing of the novella takes very little textual space.

## Chapter II. The Opening

### The narrative situation

The frame-narrator opens the novella with an image of a tranquil late afternoon on the Thames. The *Nellie*, “a cruising yawl,” is at rest waiting for the turn of the tide and farther back the air seems “condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth” (103). There are five men on board the *Nellie* among them Marlow who is going to tell his story. “For some reason or other” (103) all five “felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring” (104) in the midst of the “still and exquisite brilliance” of water sky, mist and “the gloom to the west” (104). A change in mood is introduced with the image of the sun that “sank low” and “changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death” “over a crowd of men” followed by a change “over the waters” (104). “And this also,” said Marlow suddenly, “has been one of the dark places of the earth” (105). The change in mood is confirmed by Marlow’s sudden remark.

This image of the Thames points to the fact that the river, Nature, now civilized, was once wild and untamed. Nature is also presented as not having an existence of its own, but of being of service to man. Looking at the Thames in the light of “abiding memories” “of men and ships” (104), man can almost feel the “greatness” that had “floated on the ebb of that river” (105). “But darkness was here yesterday” (106). Both narrators connect the past and the present, thus indicating that the past is also contained in the present; it is expressed in images that emerge from the collective unconscious because of the “continuity of the human mind” (Jung: 47). The linking of the past and the present also suggests that the human soul knows already

about this fact and responds to it although the conscious mind seems to have forgotten.

The reader is now introduced to Conrad's narrative method: there are two narrators, a frame narrator who begins and ends the story and a first-person narrator who becomes its main character. The frame narrator introduces the reader to the other narrator and warns the reader about his way of storytelling. He says that Marlow's yarns are not typical of the yarns of seamen: while the latter have the meaning of an episode inside the story, in Marlow's yarns "the meaning of an episode [is] not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine". This again shows that the narrative has two qualities, symbolist and impressionist: "the abstract geometry of the metaphor is symbolist because the meaning of the story, represented by the shell of the nut or the haze around the glow, is larger than its narrative vehicle, the kernel or the glow; but the sensory quality of the metaphor, the mist and haze, is essentially impressionist" (Watt 2006: 350).

### **The Romans**

Marlow explains his remark by saying that he was thinking "of very old times, when the Romans first came" to Britain, "nineteen hundred years ago" (105). The allusion to the Romans is another point of connecting the past and the present. The Romans "were no colonists"; they came to Britain located at "the very end of the world", a land with "a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke" (106). Although the Romans were civilized, they fitted in a way to the wild land they came to, because "they were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force" (107).

These warriors still guided by their instincts had “to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is detestable” although “it has a fascination, too” (106). But the Romans were “men enough to face the darkness” even without “initiation ... into such mysteries” (106).

In the light of Marlow’s story as a description of psychological processes, “the incomprehensible” is the realm of the unconscious which is something very difficult for man to comprehend. But one cannot escape from it, one has to come to terms with it; to be “born again” in a way. Marlow states that there is no initiation that could help a person to enter this new stage but, according to Jung, for thousands of years there have actually been rites of initiation that have taught spiritual rebirth (Jung: 126). Later in the novel Marlow calls Kurtz “this initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere” contradicting himself about the fact of initiation. Marlow actually says that the wilderness “sealed [Kurtz’s] soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation” (153). Thus Marlow denies initiation to a ‘proper’ life but indirectly he accepts initiation to ‘evil’ actions.

Talking about the Romans, Marlow mentions a concrete example of a Roman trireme-commander who “did it very well” “without thinking much about it ... except afterwards” (106) and of “a decent young citizen” who came to this land “to mend his fortunes”. It is not easy to understand why Marlow believes that these two should feel “the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate” (106) unless one takes account of Watts’s remark (xix) that the two Romans are “ironic counterparts” to Marlow travelling up-river and Kurtz stationed in Africa.

Referring to “the longing to escape”, Jung states that it is a natural human reaction to try to escape from problems because we humans do not like uncertainties and doubts. When we must deal with problems we “instinctively refuse to try the way

that leads through darkness and obscurity”; but in doing this we also refuse to acknowledge that we can only solve our problems only after venturing into and emerging again from the darkness (Jung: 99). Although the meaning of “darkness” in the title and in the whole novella is unclear, according to Jung “being within something or contained in something suggests darkness, the nocturnal – a state of anxiety” (Jung: 24). The tale is rich in images of the African nature surrounding and enclosing its inhabitants. And one premise for this thesis is that Marlow delves into the unknown, the unconscious.

The Romans “grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. (107). Watts refers to Hampson (Hampson: 129) who notes that a cancelled passage in the manuscript continues: “but at any rate they had no pretty fictions about it. They had no international associations from motives of philanthropy with some third rate king for head ...”. Theirs was “robbery with violence” and they were “going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness” (107). “The ... taking [of the earth] away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and the unselfish belief in the idea ...” (107). Marlow describes here both the Romans and the traders in Africa who were not colonists either. Their actions were the same: to grab “what they could get”. But while the Romans “had no pretty fictions about it”, the traders worked under the definitions and morals of a civilized world. As they are presented in the novella, the traders lack of an idea that could justify their actions. Therefore they needed a sentimental pretence, an excuse for being there and doing what they did. The Romans were at least honest, they did not pretend that they came

to Britain serving a noble cause. This lack of pretence is what Marlow regards as characterizing men who “can tackle a darkness” (107).

### **The Western world**

In the opening of the tale there are references to London as well: “the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth”, (103), “the great city” (107) but also “the place of the monstrous town ... , a brooding gloom in sunshine ...” (105). This picture of London actualises Jung’s description of the Western “monumental” cities that require all the efforts of man in order to sustain themselves. They take all the share of man’s energy, thus leaving very little, if nothing, to psychological insight and development. But above London the sun is without heat, there is something ominous hovering over the city: in Jungian terms, there is a discordance between the conscious- and the psychic life of the Western man. “What saves us is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency” (107), says Marlow. But when the Western man looks within he discovers that his world is “shabby and insufficient”, writes Jung (Jung: 219).

Intellectually and morally, the psychic life of the West is full of problems because the Western man has chosen to live in the realm of his consciousness, thus ignoring the realm of the unconscious. The Western man has created a civilization that demands his turning away from instinct that is nature and turning to consciousness that is culture. In this way he fears that consciousness cannot serve him in the same way nature has done before. Having developed consciousness long after instinct, man cannot trust it in the same way as he did with instincts (Jung: 98).

After having connecting the Romans with the traders in Africa, Marlow begins to talk about his own experience, about the effect of “it” on him but first he wants to explain how he got “there” and how he met “the poor chap” (107). To Marlow “it”

was “the culminating point of [his] experience” which “seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about [him] – and into [his] thoughts. It was ... not extraordinary in any way – not very clear either. ... And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light” (107). The listeners are now informed that Marlow is going to tell not only his own story but also the story of “the poor chap”. The reader also understands that Marlow’s experience has resulted in some kind of self-knowledge and has influenced his life.

Marlow says that before he got “there” he had travelled extensively and then he returned to London where he was “loafing about” (108) trying to find a job. From this information and from his astonishment later in the tale about the risks that young men are willing to take, we infer that Marlow is not a young man. His assumed age places him in Jung’s “psychology of the afternoon of life” which begins at about 35 or 40 years of age although it is true that physical and psychological age do not always coincide. While as a rule a young person is interested to unfold himself and strives to accomplish concrete ends, an older person is interested to affirm of what he has achieved (Jung: 59). Such a person seeks to understand the meaning of his individual life and this fact brings him, often painfully, to the experience of his own inner being (Jung: 72). This happens to Marlow.

Marlow describes his fascination with maps; as a boy he liked to look at distant places on the map, wishing to go there. There were many unexplored places at that time and Marlow was especially fascinated by “the biggest, the most blank” (108) of them. Later on, this place ceased to be “a blank space of delightful mystery” and became instead “a place of darkness” (108). What made this place attractive was a river “resembling an immense snake uncoiled” (108). This “mighty big river” fascinated Marlow “as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird” (108). It is this river

that influences Marlow's choice of destination. He explains his choice by saying that "the snake had charmed [him]" (108). This image derived from the natural world is a rather disturbing one: a snake hypnotizes its victims in order to devour them. This image pictures in a way the nature of Marlow's experience; it was a strong and dangerous one.

Marlow remembers that there was a Company for trade on that river and decides to contact the Company; he had heard that one of its captains was killed in Africa and the Company was in want of a replacement. Marlow's decision to travel to Africa, his wish for a "fresh departure" brings him to Brussels. Like London, Brussels is part of the Western world, a society based on rational laws and characterized by materialism and a strong belief in its humanist values.

### **The first visit to the sepulchral city**

Marlow says that this place always made him "think of a whited sepulchre" (110). According to St Mark's Gospel (23: 27-8), Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity". Marlow associates the city with hypocrisy because of the "philanthropic pretence" masking the desire to "make no end of coin by trade" (205). Jung takes a similar point of view about the idolized values of our conscious world, "the dubious foundations of our belauded virtues and incomparable ideals"(Jung: 216). He stresses that the Western belief in its "man-made gods" is a belief to "mere

snare and delusion tainted with human baseness – whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness" (Jung: 216).

Marlow presents the city as a big cemetery with "a narrow and deserted street in deep shadow", "a dead silence", "grass sprouting between the stones" as on graves. (110). As it is typical of Conrad's narrative method in the novella, this image becomes clear after reading the whole story; the image of death is connected to the Company's activities in Africa. It is a characteristic of the narrative that it circles around itself, thus confirming that *Heart of Darkness* is a highly interwoven text. The Company's house "was as still as a house in a city of the dead". There does not seem to be any human presence until Marlow opens the first door he comes to and he sees two women sitting there "knitting black wool". Marlow feels troubled by the look of the "old knitter" because she "seemed uncanny and fateful". He associates the women with the Fates who decided each person's life and death. He also associates them with death as the common human fate; he remembered them often in Africa as "guarding the door of Darkness" (111) when he felt himself in danger.

It is decided that Marlow should travel to the spot coloured yellow on the map. Marlow remarks that the place is "Dead in the centre". He notices also that "the river was there – fascinating - deadly – like a snake" (110). Although the matter is settled to his satisfaction, Marlow feels uneasy, because "there was something ominous in the atmosphere" (111), "something not quite right" (111). Marlow is informed by the Company's doctor that the people who travel "there" change and these "changes take place inside". This piece of information seems of no importance to Marlow at this point, nor does the information from the doctor that many of the travellers never return.

Although Marlow is used to travel and does not need to be told about a new trip a long time in advance, this time he hesitates and wonders whether he has made the right choice. Although he thinks that this is just a “commonplace affair”, he feels “for a second or two” “as though, instead of going to the centre of a continent” he was “about to set off for the centre of the earth” (113). In spite of this he maintains his decision to travel to Africa. Jung remarks that people often make great decisions ruled by instincts and other mysterious unconscious factors than their conscious will and reason. This has to do with the fact that every person “carries his own life-form – an indeterminable form which cannot be superseded by any other” (Jung: 62). The mysterious factors are psychic contents of the unconscious that are approaching the threshold of consciousness. Being part of the unconscious these contents are not understood by the conscious mind but they nevertheless influence a person’s decisions and behaviour (Jung: 32).

Instincts and other mysterious unconscious factors bring curious men “into all sorts of places (where they have no business) and may result in their coming out of them “with all kinds of spoil” (Conrad 2006: 289). Conrad states that *Heart of Darkness* is the spoil he brought out from Africa “where, really, [he] had no sort of business” (Conrad 2006: 289).

### **The journey to Africa**

Marlow travels to Africa on a French steamer. On leaving Europe he is still influenced by the convictions and beliefs that are shaped into the frames of the Western civilization he is a part of. Like everyone else he has his own presuppositions about life and himself; but as is often the case, one’s presuppositions may

occasionally be proved false because they do not always fit the changing conditions one encounters through his life course (Jung: 103).

As Marlow travels he watches the coast of the new land, because “watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma” (113-114). As a seaman he has seen many coasts at different places but he is still fascinated by what he considers as the mysterious appearance of a coast. The African coast seemed to him as “almost featureless, as if still in the making” inviting one to “come and find out” what lies behind it (114). Marlow perhaps projects his own ideas and expectations on the coast; the place seems “as still in the making” because he is on his way to actualise his new chance to a fresh beginning.

What attracts his attention is “the edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, [that] ran straight ... far, far away along a blue sea” “under a fierce sun;” (114). The image of the coast and the jungle brings to mind “the shadowy presentations” “that are spontaneously evolved in the unconscious psyche and appear without his bidding to the man who looks within” (Jung: 35). They are symbolic pictures that spring from the collective unconscious and they may appear as fantasy, which is spontaneous psychic activity that becomes conscious when the conscious control and repression is weakened. It is as if we “dream in waking life beneath the threshold of consciousness” (Jung: 32) because all depends on how we look at things, and not on how they are in themselves (Jung: 67).

The steamer goes on, “stopped, landed soldiers; went on, [and] landed custom-house clerks to levy toll in what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness” (114). Marlow feels isolated from the other passengers “with whom [he] had no point of contact” (114) and turns his attention to the scenery. The view of “the oily and languid sea, and the uniform sombreness of the coast” “seemed to keep [him] away

from the truth of things” (114). In the light of Jung’s theory, what Marlow encounters here is a kind of entrance into the world of the unconscious. It is a new, strange world and it looks fascinating as well. The unconscious appears fascinating because it is not dangerous, it is natural and rich in contents. It is perhaps the sense of this new world of experience that makes Marlow think of “the truth of things”; it presents one with an opportunity to look closer and try to find a meaning. This task becomes easier when man comes away from his known surroundings and being in a new environment man sees things in a different light.

Marlow hears “the voice of the surf”, and he sees “now and then a boat” “paddled by black fellows” who did not need an “excuse for being there” (114). The “black fellows”, the African people, are regarded in this thesis as “the archaic man”, the “primal, original man” (Jung: 127). I am well aware of Achebe’s objections in presenting the Africans in this way and/or use them as a symbol (Achebe, 2006: 344). With all respect towards Africans and Achebe, in this discussion I present people as they are apprehended and narrated by the tale’s character and I try to explain their function in the story in the light of analytical psychology.

### **The archaic man**

The archaic man lives in a state of *participation mystique* with nature and he is submerged in a common consciousness with his fellow-beings (Jung: 201). As long as man is still submerged in nature he is unconscious; he lives in the security of instinct without problems (Jung: 98). In Marlow’s storytelling these fellows “had faces like grotesque masks”, but they also had “bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast” (114).

The African with a face like a grotesque mask is viewed as strange and savage but also as cruel, and thus as an enemy. But what the white man sees on the African is what his own conscious mind fears and represses. The white civilized man secretly acknowledges that he has not only been savage himself but savage traits and cruelty are still within him, stored in the collective unconscious. But these traits do not fit in his present world and are then denied and relegated to the unconscious: that which is denied and repressed to the unconscious is then projected onto others. Whatever threatens the self-image of a person or of a whole society is projected on the world outside, on the 'other'. Projection is a widely used defence mechanism that has been with man since the dawn of history, and many cruel acts have their origin in projection. At this point it looks like the archaic man is the enemy because he threatens the conscious outlook of the European. There is an interesting connection between Jung's insight and a main point argued by Frantz Fanon about the white man's use of projection in relation to Africans: the white man projects his own unaccepted traits onto the Africans, the 'other', and treats them accordingly.

Up to this point Marlow sees the coast and the Africans from the boat. Their sight of being a natural part of the place makes him feel that he still belongs "to a world of straightforward facts;" at the same time he feels that "the feeling would not last long. Something would turn up to scare it away" (114). What shakes Marlow's "world of straightforward facts" is the "incomprehensible firing into a continent" from "a man-of-war anchored off the coast" (114). It is not only incomprehensible it seems futile too, because nothing happened "nothing could happen" (115). Although it is believed that there were enemies "hidden out of sight somewhere" (115) still there is no enemy fighting back at the steamer. The situation is characterized by "a touch of insanity" and "a sense of lugubrious drollery" (115).

Still the steamer continues passing “places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthy atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb” (115). The journey goes on “along the formless coast [that is] bordered by dangerous surf, that looks like an effort by Nature to keep away intruders” (115). The boat does not “stop long enough to get a particularised impression” and, being unable to explore his new surroundings, Marlow apprehends “a general sense of vague and oppressive wonder” (115) “like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares” (115). Marlow’s nightmares seem to have begun: he hears that “government chaps” (115) “go up country” and it is not known what happens to them there; in addition, there is a rather usual sight of people that hang themselves “on the road” without apparent reason; maybe the sun becomes too much for them or may be the country itself (116).

### **The company station**

In order to show the process of the breaking down of Marlow’s conscious world, it is necessary to use Marlow’s own words. With his particular choice of words, Marlow does not only describe his apprehension of the situation but also its influence on his mood as well.

The steamer arrives at the Company Station, an “inhabited devastation” on “a rocky cliff”, with “mounds of turned-up earth by the shore, houses on a hill, others, with iron roofs, amongst a waste of excavations” and a “lot of people, mostly black and naked”. All this is “drowned by a blinding sunlight” (116). On the path to the station Marlow notices “an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off” (116). Marlow thinks that “the thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal” (116). “More pieces of decaying machinery” and “a stack

of rusty rails” show that what is going on is the building of a railway a fact that is confirmed by the noise of blasting. But all Marlow sees is that “all the work going on” there, was the meaningless, apparently ineffective blasting of a rock that “was not in the way of anything” (116).

The sound of another blasting has “the same kind of ominous voice” as “that ship of war firing into a continent” (116) and at the same time Marlow is disturbed by the sight of six black men chained together carrying small baskets full of earth on their heads. These men are said to be criminals, but Marlow is unable to see anything criminal in their appearance and conduct. These men, with the eyes of “complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages” (117), look too exhausted to do anything at all. “Behind this raw matter one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently, carrying a rifle by its middle” (117). Marlow is now confronted by “the new forces at work” that demonstrate the level of development of the Western civilization: a meaningless blasting of a cliff, “an undersized railway-truck ... on its back” with a wheel off, and a chained “gang” of six blacks led by another black carrying a rifle (117). The black man’s effort to appear correct in front of a white man makes Marlow acknowledge that being a white himself he is “also a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings” (117).

The encounter becomes too strong for Marlow although he, as he explains, is tough and has already seen a lot. He has already experienced the cruelty of human beings led by “the devil of violence, the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire” (117). What he experiences now is the cruelty of “strong, lusty, red-eyed devils that swayed and drove men” (117). It is not possible for Marlow to place this new ‘devil’ under his known concepts and experience. What he actually experiences is his first meeting with an aspect of the dark side of man, which is usually hidden in civilized

surroundings. But he has still not experienced everything: “the blinding sunshine of that land” should later uncover another “flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly” (117).

### **The grove of death**

At this moment Marlow, appalled at the cruelty he sees, decides to abandon the place seeking refuge in the shadow nearby. But this decision brings him to what he describes as “the gloomy circle of some Inferno” “where not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved” (118) “as though the tearing pace of the launched earth had suddenly become audible” (118). In this place “black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair” (118). What is even more shocking is that, at the same time, the work “was going on” (118), thus turning the experience into a striking image of death and absurdity; it becomes almost too much for a person to reckon with. The people left to die in the grove are gathered from different parts of the country and when they become “inefficient” (118) they cease to exist. What Marlow knows about the Africans so far is that they are the white man’s enemies. They are criminals and accordingly their treatment is either being fired at or, even worse, slow and painful death.

Escaping to the station and approaching its buildings, Marlow meets “a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up” that Marlow thinks at first that he is “a sort of vision” (119). This “miracle” presents a strong contrast to the previous scene of death, revealing the gap between the ‘civilized’ whites and the dying blacks. This sudden image seems to distract Marlow’s thoughts; it becomes a kind of blessed escape from the memory of the scene of horror and the overwhelming feelings around

it. Marlow is suddenly cut off from his true feelings. Instead he turns his whole attention towards the Company's chief accountant seeking comfort in his own known civilization. Marlow's surprising reaction is respect towards "the fellow" (119), a sudden respect for "his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair" and the fact that "in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance". "That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character" (119). Although most of the novella's discourse is fused with irony, here Marlow's thoughts reveal his confused state of mind and his need to escape and find comfort somewhere. The true state of affairs in Africa is summed up in Marlow's description of the Station as "a muddle, [of] heads, things, buildings" (119). As Adam Hochschild has noted, Marlow's description of the trading activities gives "a crisp summary of the Leopoldian economy" (Hochschild: 176) as "a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads and brass-wire" that were exchanged with "a precious trickle of ivory" (119).

### **The company's chief accountant**

The 'humanness' that lies behind the civilization which the Company's chief accountant represents is revealed whenever a sick agent is brought to the Station. The accountant shows "a gentle annoyance" because "the groans of this sick person" distracted his attention making "extremely difficult [for him] to guard [himself] against clerical errors in this climate" (120). Marlow's sudden respect for this person has been interpreted as a sign of his confused state of mind resulting from exposure to extreme stress. Marlow himself confirms this fact: he explains to his listeners that the only reason he remembers the accountant is that he was the first person who mentioned Kurtz to him. The accountant informs Marlow that in the interior of the

country he is going to meet Mr Kurtz, “a first-class agent”, and “a very remarkable person” (120). This “Mr Kurtz was at present in charge of a trading post, a very important one, in the true ivory-country, at “the very bottom of there. Sends as much ivory as all the others put together” (120). The accountant continues to talk about other things but when he confesses that “one comes to hate those savages – hate them to death” (120), he “remain[s] thoughtful” and suddenly talks about Kurtz again. It looks like the hate against the blacks is somehow connected to Kurtz and this fact is confirmed later on. Marlow’s first piece of information about Kurtz is his name and his vocation although there is already an allusion to him in the passage about the “flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil” (117). Marlow’s image summing up his staying at the Station is: “the homeward-bound agent [who] was lying flushed and insensible; the other, bent over his books, was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep ... [were] the still tree-tops of the grove of death” (121).

What Marlow’s experiences in his first encounter with the Company’s people in Africa conflicts with his knowledge and assumptions about the European civilization and its moral values. What he experiences shows the Europeans as being cruel towards the Africans hiding their cruel actions behind a definition. He gets a glimpse of the shadow-side of the West a fact that is difficult to accept.

As already mentioned, the psychic life of the Western man is full of problems due to his conscious thinking and his lack of psychological insight. Whatever comes in conflict with the self-image and the world-image of the Western man is denied and suppressed to the unconscious. What rescues the Western man from the threat of destruction of his conscious self-image is his projection of his own shadow-side on others. As Marlow experiences, the blacks are defined as enemies and are fired

blindly to. They are also called criminals by “the outraged law” “from over the sea” (117) and they are chained and set to hard work. On becoming unable to work they are left to die from starvation. This first meeting with the frightening contents of the unconscious is what Marlow encounters and feels appalled by. The other white people in Africa seem also to recognize the strange forces that threaten their psychic world but they choose to fight against them. They feel that these forces can be dangerous but they do not know how to handle them since they are consciously denied and rejected.

### Chapter III. The Breaking Down of the Conscious World

#### Leaving the Station

Marlow leaves the Station “for a two-hundred-mile tramp” (121) and he gives a fine, lively description of the nature around him: paths, grass, thickets, ravines, hills and abandoned villages. Although Marlow is in company of sixty men, what marks it all is a feeling of solitude and “a great silence around and above” (121). This description appears again in other parts of the novella, showing Conrad’s strong visual sense. In the preface to *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*, Conrad writes that “art depends for its success on an “impression conveyed through the senses” (Conrad 2006: 280). The narrative method Conrad uses in *Heart of Darkness* is subjective and impressionist because it presents Marlow’s own understanding of events, persons and natural surroundings; it is an individual understanding limited by its own ambiguous nature because it is of an inward and experiential kind.

On his way to the Central Station Marlow meets “a white man in an unbuttoned uniform”, apparently drunk, who was looking for “the upkeep of the road” (121). Marlow cannot see either a road or any upkeep, the only thing he sees everywhere is death: “now and then a carrier” and “the body of a middle-aged Negro, with a bullet hole in the forehead”. Marlow comments that the latter “may be considered as a permanent improvement” (121). The whites appear to be accustomed to the death that surrounds them, they do not seem to notice it or if they do, they do not seem disturbed at all until the sun of the land reveals too much for them.

Marlow tries to help his sick companion by appealing to their carriers but all ends up “wrecked in a bush – man, hammock, groans, blankets, horrors” (122). The sick man wants Marlow to kill someone and Marlow’s surprising comment is that “but there wasn’t the shadow of a carrier near” (122). What does Marlow mean with

this disturbing remark? Does he mean that he would have killed somebody if any of the carriers were in sight? Apparently, Marlow feels the absurdity of his reaction, because he explains it by saying that the incident brings to mind the words of the Company doctor “it would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot” (122). Marlow now feels that he “was becoming scientifically interesting” indicating thus that he is already feeling that the changes the doctor talked about are already present in him. From a psychological point of view, Marlow’s experiences have so far turned themselves into repressed thoughts and emotions and he begins to feel their burden. His comment that the event has not any purpose indicates his use of a self-defence mechanism (denial) to minimize its significance in order to avoid the stress it implies.

### **The people at the central station**

After a fifteen day march Marlow “came in sight of the big river again, and hobbled into the Central Station” (122) where he notices immediately that “the flabby devil was running that show” (122). There were “white men there with long staves in their hands” (122), Marlow’s first meeting with the ‘pilgrims’. From one of them Marlow receives the shocking information that the steamer he was to work with “was at the bottom of the river” (122). The meaning of the event came to Marlow much later; the manager was trying to prevent the sick Kurtz from coming back to the station as quickly as possible.

The manager of the station, “a common trader”, “was commonplace in complexion, in feature, in manners, and in voice. He was of middle size and of ordinary build” (123), having “no learning, and no intelligence”; but like the wilderness he inspires uneasiness, “just uneasiness – nothing more” (123). What

justifies his position there, is probably strong health, because he “originated nothing” but only keeps “the routine going”; “perhaps there was nothing within him” (123). The same remark is repeated when Marlow encounters an agent at the Station and again when Marlow comments on Kurtz. These people appear to be hollow at the core. Although they are regarded as well-functioning members of their community, at a close look they appear to lack important qualities that are typical for well-functioning individuals. Marlow mentions Kurtz to the manager and although the latter assures Marlow that “Mr Kurtz was the best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company” (124), he looks rather upset when Kurtz’s name is mentioned.

Marlow begins to work on the steamer, turning his back to the Station. He considers both these acts as necessary in helping him to keep himself to the facts of life (125), because life at the Station is not in accordance with his own understanding of physical reality. “Still, one must look about sometimes” (125), admits Marlow; he looks about but what he sees, the Station and “these men strolling aimlessly about” (125), does not give him an answer about “what it all meant” (125). Marlow tries to find a meaning in those men’s actions; “they wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence” (125). Pilgrims are thought to be on their way to God or other holy destination but these men seemed not on the way somewhere; they do not even appear having a destination or a holy belief. Their belief was the word “ivory” that “rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it” (125).

The situation looks unreal to Marlow and it becomes even more “unreal” when Marlow notices that “outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth” looked “as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting

patiently for the passing of this fantastic invasion” (125). What Marlow becomes aware of is the great contrast between Nature and Man, the wilderness and civilization: the wilderness is great and silent, the man walks aimlessly around and is cruel to other humans every time he gets the chance. Even the silence of nature contains a meaning, but this meaning is absent from the talking of man.

In the station “all the sixteen or twenty pilgrims” (126) “beguiled the time by backbiting and intriguing against each other in a foolish kind of way” (126). “There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it” and “it was as unreal as everything else”. What Marlow now understands is that not only the pilgrims themselves are unreal but “the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern”, “their talk”, “their government”, and “their show of work” (126). Behind their “philanthropic pretence” there is the pilgrims’ desire to “get appointed to a trading-post” (126) where they can earn money in contrast to the Romans’ lack of pretence and their honesty about their actions. To achieve this they “intrigued and slandered and hated each other” (126). This again confirms Jung’s statement about the kind of concerns of the Western man that consume all his thoughts and efforts leaving no time and effort to psychological insight and development.

### **Mephistopheles**

Marlow finds himself in the company of “a first-class agent, young, gentlemanly, a bit reserved, with a forked little beard and a hooked nose” (125-126) whom the other agents suspect to be “the manager’s spy upon them” (126). He is the Company’s brick-maker although Marlow cannot see “a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station” (126). In his room Marlow notices “a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The

background was sombre – almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister” (127). He is informed that Mr Kurtz had painted the sketch, Mr Kurtz who is “a prodigy”, “an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else” (127). Kurtz represents “the guidance of the cause intrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose” (127). With this painting Kurtz shows the irony behind the idea of bringing civilization to Africa: the whites’ effort lacks vision as is shown in the blindfold on Kurtz’ painting (210).

Conrad was inspired by several persons in creating Mr Kurtz: while he travelled down the river on the *Roi des Belges*, a French agent at Stanley Falls, Georges Antoine Klein, died on board. Another source of inspiration was Major Edmund Barttelot, “who went mad, began biting, whipping and killing people, and was finally murdered”. Another real person who contributed to the creation of Mr Kurtz was Arthur Hodister, a Belgian known for his harem of African women and his capacity for gathering much ivory. However, the person who resembles Conrad’s Kurtz most is Captain Leon Rom of the Force Publique who was “both a murderous head collector and an intellectual”; and he was a writer and a painter as well (Hochschild 2006: 176, 178-179).

Conrad’s genius does not specify the ethnicity of his Kurtz by connecting him to a particular group. The reader is informed that he was partly educated in England and could speak English; but the most significant information is that “all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (154). This sentence is typical of the rich symbolism of the novella. It reveals Conrad’s criticism of the whole European imperialism and his knowledge about human cruelty not limited to a particular group of people.

So far the only person who seems 'right' to Marlow is Kurtz; what he hears about him presents Kurtz as totally different from the other persons he has encountered. This fact makes Marlow suspect that Kurtz is a person who, like Marlow, thinks that what happens in Africa is not right. What surprises Marlow is that he himself is connected to Kurtz because, as he hears, the same persons in Europe who sent Kurtz have also recommended Marlow; both are considered "of the new gang – the gang of virtue" (127). This fact strengthens the assertion of this thesis that Kurtz not only represents the Shadow in Jungian terms. He is the shadow of the Western man and of Marlow as well. The last acknowledgement explains Marlow's determination to handle the shadow alone and his later breakdown.

While the pilgrims are engaged on their discussions, Marlow turns his attention to the forest standing "spectrally in the moonlight". He notices that beyond "the faint sounds of that lamentable courtyard" "the silence of the land went home to one's very heart" (128). Marlow senses the "mystery" of the land, "the greatness", and "the amazing reality of its concealed life". Jung gives a similar description of Africa: "One must imagine the velvety blue of a tropical night, the overhanging black masses of gigantic trees standing in a virgin forest, the mysterious voices of the nocturnal spaces, ... and above all the conviction expressed by an old Afrikaner who knew what he was saying: "This isn't man's country – it's God's country". There man is not king; it is rather nature – the animals, plants and microbes. ... That is the world of unrestrained, capricious powers" (Jung: 142). Both descriptions confirm the greatness of nature and its powers and their impact on man: although these powers seem absent in man-made surroundings, they still exist and they influence man when he comes in contact with them.

While the agent keeps talking Marlow thinks of him as a “papier-mâché Mephistopheles” (128). This person is already described as a diabolic figure with his “forked little beard” and “hooked nose” (126). His talking makes Marlow think that he could “poke [his] forefinger through him” (128) without meeting resistance because the man is empty inside. What can be found inside the brick-maker, if it is anything at all, can be “a little loose dirt” (128). Later on Marlow also characterizes Kurtz as hollow at the core and he is going to describe him as having much more than “little loose dirt”. At this point the man talks “precipitately” (128) while Marlow rests his shoulders “against the wreck of [his] steamer” (128) as though trying to keep in touch with his own world, although his world is shaken and looks like “a carcass of some big river animal”.

## **Nature**

Marlow is very much aware of the nature around him; he can smell the “primeval mud” and sense “the high stillness of primeval forest” (128). “The moon had spread over everything a thin layer of silver, ... [and] over the great river [he] could see through a sombre gap glittering, glittering, as it flowed broadly by without a murmur” (128-129). Marlow feels the strong contrast between “all this” which “was great, expectant, mute” and “the man [who] jabbered about himself” (129).

The great contrast between the “stillness on the face of the immensity” (129) and the man jabbering about himself makes Marlow wonder if the stillness was “meant as an appeal or as a menace” (129). It is a strange, unknown stillness. There are two men engaged in a meaningless conversation while nature remains silent; is it an invitation to remain silent or a menace because of man’s blindness in front of nature? Is man able to handle nature or is nature handling man? What Marlow senses

now is the realm of the Western consciousness absorbed in itself and its own small affairs and ambitions and the realm of the silent, waiting unconscious.

Marlow feels “how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn’t talk, and perhaps was deaf as well”. “What was in there?” (129). Marlow is right in his assumption that the unconscious may hide both precious “ivory” and Kurtz as well: the unconscious contains both valuable elements and elements that are rejected and can become dangerous. An interesting element of the discussion between Marlow and “Mephistopheles” is the mention of hippopotamus by the brick-maker; this animal lives in the jungle and has “a charmed life”. It sounds like an element of the unconscious. The hippopotamus represents the instinctive life of man that does not fit in the life of a civilized world. The animal lives in the wilderness from which it emerges and frightens the people at the Central Station. Too much focus on the conscious psychic realm brings forth a compensatory activity from the unconscious: the hippopotamus comes out from the jungle and it cannot be killed (or ignored, rejected, repressed) any more. It serves no purpose to “empty every rifle” on it, the only remedy is to understand it and try to come in terms with it.

Although at this point the unconscious seems silenced by the strong consciousness it is in fact talking with the powerful image of nature. Marlow notices that although the language of the unconscious seems strange, it can be sensed. The silence is only apparent, the denial of the unconscious can result in its eruptions when it takes control of the consciousness; it can cause changes “within” or make people hang themselves because the sun or the country reveals too much for them. This “great wall of vegetation ... was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, ... ready ... to sweep every little man ... out of his little existence” (132). It is the unconscious powers Marlow seems to apprehend here.

Beyond the workings of the intellect there is thinking in primordial images that spring from the unconscious. While intellectual thinking brings out what we have consciously put in, thinking in primordial images is in a way involuntary; it is the way in which the human psyche works. Primordial images are symbols that are older than historical man and they have been in man since the beginning of time. Man can live in harmony with his true nature only when he lives in harmony with the primordial images of the unconscious; these images constitute in fact the source of man's conscious thinking. The attempt to return to these symbols thus making them a part of consciousness is an aspect of wisdom. This is the task the West is called upon; to remember the fact that man is not only the product of the present civilization because this kind of civilization cannot satisfy all his needs; it is based on only one part of human nature (consciousness), ignoring the other (the unconscious).

Marlow lets the agent believe that he has important contacts in Europe. Yet he feels that he somehow betrays himself; he becomes "in an instant as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims" (129). His reason for lying is that he believes it would help Kurtz somehow. The thought of "that Kurtz" becomes important to Marlow, although he could not at that time see the real person behind the name; he was just a word. But who can see him? Marlow turns to his listeners, his fellow companions on the *Nellie*: "Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything?" (129). "It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams" (129).

Marlow states that it is very difficult to describe his special kind of experience regarding a part of his own life. He apprehends some kind of understanding but this is unclear and difficult to describe. Consciousness does not succeed in illuminating this fact because it depends on words in order to explain it adequately. But the dream, using pictures, reveals it as it is: unclear and bewildering.

Speaking in symbolic pictures, the dream often brings to light unconscious contents (Jung: 3) and although the conscious mind is not aware of it, it reveals the true subjective state of a person. The dream is the result of involuntary psychic processes that are not controlled by consciousness. We dream also in a waking state when our conscious control is weakened and contents of the unconscious appear as a dreamlike fantasy. Being foreign to the conscious mind, unconscious contents can appear as surprising and frightening and can cause a person's bewilderment and revolt. Strong dreams can also create a notion of the person "being captured by the incredible", the unconscious.

Marlow seems distressed at this point, he seems to re-experience the feelings of that time and the frame narrator takes over, informing the reader that Marlow "was silent for a while" (129). Marlow begins to talk again trying to pick up the thread of his storytelling. He states that it is impossible to convey the truth and the meaning of man's life- sensation during his existence. Each man lives as he dreams, alone, and only each man himself is able to convey the meaning of his existence. He turns again to his listeners but his distressed speech is interrupted again. The frame narrator takes over again and describes the narrative situation at this point: it is dark on the Thames now and on the *Nellie* everybody is silent, may be asleep. But the unknown frame narrator seems influenced by Marlow's narrative, he listens to it with expectation and he feels the impact of Marlow's story, a "narrative that seemed to shape itself without

human lips” (130). Like Marlow, his listener is in a want of an explanation and he appears influenced both by Marlow’s emotions and by the story he narrates.

### **The Ego**

Marlow continues by telling that there were no powers behind him, indeed nothing was behind him. The only thing Marlow has to reckon with is “nothing but that wretched, old, mangled steamboat [he] was leaning against” (130) and to which he seeks comfort by working with it. After all it was his wish to work on this boat that brought him to Africa and gave him a chance to find out what he can accomplish.

From a psychological point of view Marlow is talking about his ego; he feels that his ego is threatened. What constitutes Marlow, his conscious personality, has been influenced by a series of events that do not entirely fit in his psychic make-up. A grown-up man who has experienced life and has created a set of beliefs and presuppositions is now confronted by experiences that show another world-image than the one he knows. His knowledge about human nature is also shaken; he has experienced many ‘devils’ in his life but he is now confronted with ‘devils’ he cannot place within his known concepts. Even worse, he acknowledges that he is also part of “these high and just proceedings” because he is a member of the white community and he has chosen to come here just like the others.

He seems now to enter the process which makes him sense the dualistic nature of human ego. He is still the man he knows himself to be, but at the same time he too is undeniably a part of the “great cause” that brought suffering and death to Africans: in certain cases he too can become “as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims” (129), a fact that proves his dualistic nature. Now he just notices the fact trying not to give too much attention to it. This is an understandable attitude: to admit

and accept the duality of one's own human nature involves much suffering and struggle, and man needs time to come to terms with unpleasant facts. Accepting that man has both a good and a bad side brings with it the acknowledgement of one's shadow-side too; this is what makes the Western man shrink from the possibility of insight which results in conscious psychic development.

In the meantime life at the station goes on: five instalments come "with the loot of innumerable outfit shops and provision stores", "an inextricable mess of things decent in themselves but that human folly made look like the spoils of thieving" (133). "This devoted band called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition" (133); these people seemed totally unaware that what is necessary for "the work of the world" is "foresight" or "serious intention" and not the desire to rob the treasures of a foreign land. One day the expedition "went into the patient wilderness that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver" (136) and "long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead" (136). Marlow has not heard any more about "the fate of the less valuable animals" but he assumes that they "found what they deserved" (136) "like the rest of us". Marlow becomes more and more aware that although he disapproves what is going on around him, he is no better than the rest of the Europeans at the Station; he still keeps on with his work and sometimes he thinks about Kurtz, the man who is said to come to Africa with "moral ideas of some sort" (133).

Thus far, Marlow feels appalled and shocked because of the brutality and greed he sees among his fellow white men. What he experiences becomes a secret that he keeps to himself because, as it appears, he has not a single friend at the Station. This knowledge and the emotions connected with it become what Jung characterizes as a "burden of guilt". To possess secrets cuts one off from community with others,

and the act of repressing emotions ends up in sickness. Repressed emotions become independent complexes of the unconscious and they demand much effort to be kept under control. They can surface and disturb a person's psychic life. What Marlow needs in order to avoid this is to find someone who he can confess to and share his burden with, but having no friends there is not any possibility for doing so.

### **Kurtz**

Marlow overhears a discussion between the manager and his uncle about Kurtz: on approaching the station Kurtz is said to suddenly turn back and return to his trading post. This is beyond their understanding because they cannot understand the motive behind this action, if there is one. This incident makes an impression on Marlow who thinks that he sees Kurtz for the first time. What he sees is "the dug-out, four paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home – perhaps; setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station. ... Perhaps he was just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake" (135). But what Marlow really sees is his own romantic picture of "the lone white man" and what this man should feel and think. The same romantic image makes Marlow to falsely believe that Kurtz may be is after all like him. Marlow has no common points of view with the people in the administration at the Station and he is not one of the pilgrims. He thinks that he has common points of view with Kurtz because as Marlow hears, Kurtz turns his back to station. Like Marlow, Kurtz does not approve what happens at the Station and he prefers to return to the wilderness thus rejecting his fellow-whites and their world. May be Kurtz is a person to whom Marlow can talk, confess, and hear an explanation about what is going on. After all Kurtz is a remarkable, eloquent man

with ideals and he appears to be different from the rest since they so strongly disapprove him.

### **Travelling**

Marlow begins the journey towards Kurtz's post in the wilderness. The journey becomes a peculiar experience because it does not look like anything else Marlow has experienced before. In an attempt to describe it Marlow presents an image of nature that goes beyond a mere description of a place: "Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings" (136). It is a journey back in time but also a journey into the unknown, in the realm of the human psyche which is not usually attended by man, the realm of the unconscious. A place with "an empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest" (136) where "the air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish". In such a place "there was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine" (136). There is no joy in the unconscious, because "being within something or contained in something suggests darkness, the nocturnal – a state of anxiety" (Jung: 24). The unconscious is a realm which is inhabited by elements such as hippos and alligators and the archaic man. In this unknown place "one loses one's way", "till [you] thought [your]self bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once – somewhere – far away – in another existence perhaps" (137). What Marlow feels cut off from now is his known world of consciousness which he remembers with wonder as "an unrestful and noisy dream" (137). Removed from the people and the social life of this world, it begins to fade because it has no points of similarity with "the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence" (137).

“And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect” (137). This strong feeling remains with Marlow for a long time, it is something he cannot forget and thus has to accept. In the meantime Marlow is too busy trying to navigate the boat in unknown waters, attempting to avoid “hidden banks” and “sunken stones”. “When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality – the reality, I tell you – fades. The inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness, watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows ...” (137). As Marlow turns suddenly to his listeners, the reader is reminded of the narrative situation: there are others in addition to the reader who listen to the story. One of them is the frame narrator, who is known to the reader. But now there is another one who responds to Marlow’s words, asking him to behave in a civilized manner.

Attending to “things of that sort” indicates Marlow’s effort to keep himself in touch with reality and thus protect himself from the overwhelming powers of the unconscious. This is a healthy reaction because it aims at the protection of the conscious personality that functions as the means of working with unconscious contents. It is important that the conscious personality should not be destroyed or damaged and instead co-operate with the unconscious. Its function is to assimilate the unconscious contents and turn the unconscious compensations to something good (Jung: 21).

Navigating the Congo river seems like the efforts of a blindfolded man who is “set to drive a van over a bad road “ (137) and Marlow is proud of managing not to sink the boat. “After all, for a seaman, to scrape the bottom of the thing that’s

supposed to float all the time under his care is the unpardonable sin” (137). Conrad expresses a similar point of view in *Lord Jim*; “there is something peculiar in a small boat upon the wide sea. ... When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you (*Lord Jim*: 79).

From a psychological point of view, Marlow reveals that in spite of his difficulties he manages to retain contact with reality, aided by his conscious self that helps him to navigate among difficulties. In order to achieve this he spends no time on the emotions that spring from the situation. Moreover with his effort to maintain a psychological balance he strives to forget and conceal his emotions from himself. This is a dangerous practice because the emotions do not disappear; they just come out of awareness and they can still be harmful. The effect of this repression is shown in Marlow’s state of mind when he returns to Europe and feels himself unable to bear the sight of people.

On board there are also the manager and three or four pilgrims. On passing some station they are greeted by the whites there who seem “very strange, - have the appearance of being held there captive by a spell” (138). They do not seem to fit in the picture of the place they were thrown in until the word “ivory” establishes immediately the contact with the civilized world. And then the boat continues “into the silence, along empty reaches, round the still bends, between the high walls of [their] winding way” (138).

“Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico. It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing that feeling” (138). Once again Marlow notices the greatness of nature compared to fragile man. Confronted

with nature man feels small and lost. Still, this is not a depressive feeling if man remembers his connection to nature. The man keeps on and he manages to keep on crawling after all. He crawls towards his destination although the destination is very different for each one. The pilgrims' destination is unknown to Marlow; he supposes that they want to come to a place where they can get something out of it. Marlow knows his own destination: he travels towards Kurtz "exclusively" (138). Hampson (Hampson: 212) refers to a cancelled passage in the manuscript where it is written "towards the man possessed of moral ideals holding a torch in the heart of darkness".

"The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell" (138). "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 accused inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil" (138-139).

This immense greatness is inhabited by the prehistoric man who here appears as "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage" while "the steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy" (139). The language of the prehistoric man is forgotten and appears to be unknown: was he "cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell?" (139). The Western man does not know any more, he is not in contact with the prehistoric man within, he has even forgotten that the prehistoric man exists at all.

Marlow here senses the contents of the unconscious going back in time, forgotten by consciousness but still present. Being "too far" away one forgets the known modes of conscious behaviour that help man into the frame of his world. Man feels the need for a new mode that serves the new conditions. But there is no guidance

and help to achieve this; there is no initiation to such mysteries although the need for one becomes too strong now. It becomes difficult to understand what is going on around one, man wonders and feels “secretly appalled” (139) in front of the freedom and the strange events which man witnesses. Marlow finds himself on an earth that seemed “unearthly” (139) and his feeling is one of “travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories” (139). According to Jung, the first ages of man are not gone without leaving memories behind; on the contrary, their memories still exist stored in the collective unconscious of man. Marlow’s images of nature and of the prehistoric man are in fact these memories of the first ages that surface to his consciousness.

Everything man sees is “monstrous and free”, “unearthly” but what surprises Marlow is his slowly coming understanding that the men, “the archaic man” are human. He senses his own kinship with them although the thought surprises and appals him. He belongs to a civilized group of men but he still feels that he is also a member of the group of the men he encounters in ‘the unknown’. He is “man enough” to admit to himself “that there was in [him] just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it” (139). He is in touch with the unconscious mind and he begins to comprehend the meaning of what he sees because his mind, the mind of man, “is capable of anything” (139); “all the past as well as the future” is contained in it. The statement shows Marlow’s clear apprehension of the collective unconscious and its influence on the human psyche. What is interesting here is that Marlow finds a meaning in the image of the archaic man; he has already said that he did not manage to find meaning behind the life at the Central Station.

“What was there after all?” Or, what is the unconscious trying to communicate? “Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage – who can tell?” Perhaps everything. What Marlow can see in it is truth, “truth stripped of its cloak of time” (139). He begins to understand something, although what exactly he understands is not yet clear. To understand this truth he must connect it to his conscious concepts and see their combined meaning. But the Western civilization does not possess this kind of concepts; those best known are the ones useful in navigating in the realm of everyday life. Still, Marlow has to apprehend what he experiences and try to attach some meaning to it. Making this a part of his knowledge, the widening of his consciousness, is going to bring him to the stage of transformation, a ‘reborn’ human being aware of his conscious and unconscious nature. But this is a process that is very difficult for a man to undertake alone. As analytical psychology states, he can achieve this by talking about the distress he feels caused by the strange encounters and come to an explanation that is going to help him understand and accept them.

“Let the fool gape and shudder – the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet the truth with his own true stuff – with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won’t do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags – rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row – is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced. Of course, a fool, what with sheer fright and fine sentiments, is always safe. Who’s that grunting? You wonder I didn’t go ashore for a howl and a dance? Well, no – I didn’t. Fine sentiments, you say? Fine sentiments, be hanged! I had no time” (139-140).

Principles, acquisitions, and possessions are the workings of consciousness that serve man as long as he lives in the frame of the civilization that has produced them. But they prove themselves unable to come to man’s assistance when they are taken out of their context. What a person needs is “a deliberate belief” behind all that man knows, a belief that can serve him in all his encounters, and make him respond to “this fiendish row”, and even accept it as a part of himself. Marlow does not respond

to the appeal with “a howl and a dance”, he does not live in the realm of instincts any more, but it is important that he feels that the appeal is there. Kurtz has apparently reacted in a different way: he responded to the appeal uncritically thus sacrificing the consciousness that could guide him.

Again the attendance of the immediate reality comes to Marlow’s rescue: he is very busy steering the boat along dangerous snags and make it “crawl” “by hook or by crook. There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man” (140). And “we crept on, towards Kurtz. But the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it, and thus neither that fireman nor I had any time to peer into our creepy thoughts” (140). “Some fifty miles below the Inner Station” (140), at a place “where it could be only found after approach” (141) Marlow finds a book, “an extraordinary find” (141). This surprising contact with the world Marlow left behind reminds him that he has lost contact with his ‘old self’, the person who liked to read books. In his place there is a person who strives to find his way without guidance in a new landscape. The old clues cannot save “a wiser man” because they do not fit in the new reality.

“The current was more rapid now, the steamer seemed at her last gasp” and Marlow is afraid that “the wretched thing” is about “to give up every moment. It was like watching the last flickers of a life. But still we crawled” (142). It is like his ego, his conscious personality is struggling to defend itself from the powers that are set loose and threaten its cohesion and existence. But his ego still manages to maintain itself.

While “the manager displayed a beautiful resignation” Marlow argues with himself whether or not he will talk openly with Kurtz, but before he can decide the matter he concludes that his “speech or silence, indeed any [of his] actions would be a

mere futility” (142). After all “what did it matter what any one knew or ignored?” (142). “One gets sometimes such a flash of insight. The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach, and beyond my power of meddling” (142). Perhaps it is still unclear what he knows or ignores. He has only “a flash of insight”, but still this is not enough to reveal “the essentials” of his knowledge and ignorance; besides, Marlow has not time to think much about it either. Marlow’s attendance to the immediate reality works in a positive way by protecting him from his “creepy thoughts”; on the other hand, it works as a hindrance too, because Marlow has no time to process the new thoughts and try to assimilate them.

### **The crew**

Travelling on “that river” offers another new experience to Marlow. The black crew, the “fine fellows – cannibals – in their place” (138), come to his assistance. They are the image of the archaic man who although he appears foreign, he is actually close to the civilized man because, as mentioned before, every civilized human being is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche. One archaic man is “the savage who was a fireman” (140). He proves himself to be “that really fine chap” (140), “was hard at work” and “useful” in navigation. The archaic man is not the civilized man’s enemy, when met and acknowledged he can be a valuable source of knowledge and a helper when navigating through life.

Marlow gives a fine description of the boat’s movement on the river against the powerful nature that surrounds him: “The current ran smooth and swift, but a dumb immobility sat on the banks” (143). Although “the living trees, lashed together by the creepers and every living bush of the undergrowth” (142) still make a powerful sight, they seem immobile as well: they look as though they “might have been

changed into stone” (143). The whole seems unnatural, it is like something one experiences in a state of trance. The silence prevails again: “not the faintest sound of any kind [that] could be heard” (143). To someone used to all the sounds of his ‘civilized’ surroundings this experience seems unnatural. The continuous noise of consciousness is silenced; everyday human contacts, ambitions and strivings all disappear as Marlow confronts his unconscious. “Then the night came suddenly, and struck you blind as well” (143). Both the sounds and the sights of conscience cease to exist. All that is dominant in the life of Western man disappears as Marlow enters the realm of the unknown. In this silent land even the splashing of a fish is experienced as a loud sound, comparable to a gun being fired.

The stillness is interrupted by “a cry, a very loud cry, as of infinite desolation” and “the sheer unexpectedness of it makes [Marlow’s] hair stir under [his] cap” (143). “It culminated in a hurried outbreak of almost intolerably excessive shrieking, which stopped short, leaving us stiffened in a variety of silly attitudes” (143). The pilgrims’ reaction to the cry is to run into the cabin and fetch their rifles; this is the normal reaction of man used to live in his safe and well-ordered world where the unexpected arouses fear and violence. Whatever man does not understand man fears, and he is even ready to kill in order to protect himself. But in this case there is no apparent event to justify the fear. The only thing seen is the outline of the boat and this “blurred as though she had been on the point of dissolving” (143) in her surroundings. “The rest of the world was nowhere, ... Just nowhere. Gone, disappeared; swept off without leaving a whisper or a shadow behind” (143-144).

Returning to his task of navigating the boat, Marlow notices the interesting contrast of “expressions of the white men and of the black fellows of [his] crew, who were as much strangers to that part of river” (144) as Marlow and his white

companions. “The whites, of course greatly discomposed, had besides a curious look of being painfully shocked by such an outrageous row. The others had an alert, naturally interested expression; but their faces were essentially quiet, even those of the one or two who grinned as they hauled at their chain. Several exchanged short, grunting phrases, which seemed to settle the matter to their satisfaction” (144). There is a contrast between those who are used to live in natural surroundings and those who live in man-made surroundings. While a change in the course of things makes the latter group confused, the others seem better prepared to tackle it.

Marlow becomes aware that the black crew must be extremely hungry. They had their provision of rotten hippo-meat but it was not sure that they still had enough of it. In “a high-handed proceeding” (144) the pilgrims had thrown a quantity of it in the river, thus depriving the crew of their food. The Company had engaged the Africans for six months, although it is not sure that they understood the terms. For instance, Africans do not have the same understanding of the concept of time as Europeans since they “still belonged to the beginnings of time” (144). Their engagement was made “in accordance with some farcical law or other made down the river” (144) and it is by no means certain that they have understand its meaning. What is more appalling is their payment; “they had given them every week three pieces of brass wire, each about nine inches long; and the theory was that they were to buy their provisions with that currency in river-side villages. You can see how *that* worked. There were either no villages, or the people were hostile, or the director ... didn’t want to stop the steamer for some more or less recondite reason” (145). But this “extravagant salary” “was paid with a regularity worthy of a large and honourable trading company” (145).

A new aspect of the “civilized proceedings” in Africa is added to Marlow’s experiences: a combination of cruelty and deception levelled at innocent people depriving them of food in order to increase the Company’s profit. In addition, it is expected that the crew breathing “dead hippo-meat waking, sleeping, and eating, [should] ... at the same time keep [a] precarious grip on existence” (144-145). Marlow is amazed by the fact that the crew did not ‘go’ for the whites; after all they were assumed to be cannibals, and they outnumbered the whites. Although weak from malnutrition, they could still win and get themselves enough food.

Although Marlow thinks that these thoughts were the result of “the playful paw-strokes of the wilderness” (145), he is still amazed by the black fellows who are human beings like him. Being human means that they are driven by the same human passions as their white companions. Marlow is curious about their “impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses” (145) that prevent them from attacking the whites. What he discovers in them is restraint, though he cannot understand what kind of restraint this could be: “superstition, disgust, patience, fear – or some kind of primitive honour?” (145-146). Whatever it is, it is something great, something that conquers hunger. It is a human quality which becomes even greater if seen in the light of the whites’ behaviour towards them.

The contents of the unconscious mind are considered hostile by the civilized man and are treated harshly. This kind of conscious outlook can be dangerous because, as Jung states, the unconscious can seize power over consciousness and the overwhelming of consciousness by the unconscious can be destructive for man. In this case the unconscious forces do not attack; they are in some kind of contact with the conscious man despite their treatment by him. But Marlow apprehends that there are other, unknown and thus dangerous forces waiting in the wilderness.

Meanwhile the boat is caught in a dangerous situation, “whether drowned at once or not, we were sure to perish speedily in one way or another” (146). The whites on board wonder if they will be attacked or not but Marlow thinks that it cannot be possible because the cry heard, although “wild and violent” (147) does not seem hostile. Marlow apprehends it as “an irresistible impression of sorrow” (147) and he is right; he understands later on that the attack was indeed an attempt to prevent the whites from taking Kurtz away. Marlow tries to pacify the men on board while he watches the fog “for the signs of lifting” (147). “Two hours after the fog lifted” (147) the boat comes under attack.

### **The attack**

The description of Marlow’s tackling of the attack confirms the fact that he is under extreme psychic pressure. The attack comes after a series of shocking and appalling experiences that already demand strong psychic effort to be kept under control. This additional stress situation, if comprehended clearly, could result in Marlow’s panic reaction and in his inability to react in a correct way and thus rescuing himself. He avoids this by denying comprehending what exactly is going on around him. I will also remind of the fact that Marlow confesses later that he was in a peculiar state of mind when he returned to Europe: he felt that he was unable to control his feelings and reactions. As the discussion in this thesis hopefully shows, this state of mind is typical for a person having experienced much stress as a result of accumulated traumatic experiences.

The description of the attack is the most obvious impressionist aspect of the narrative method used in *Heart of Darkness*. The events are presented as scenes happening in dreams, or nightmares for that matter, and the person experiencing them

strives to comprehend their meaning. To express the way in which the consciousness elicits meaning from its perceptions Conrad uses a narrative device called delayed decoding. The term, coined by Ian Watt, describes the narrative technique of presenting a sense impression but withholding naming it or explaining its meaning until later; as readers we witness every step by which the gap between the individual perception and its cause is belatedly closed within the consciousness of the protagonist. The technique of delayed decoding combines the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning. Conrad presents the protagonist's immediate sensations, and thus makes the reader aware of the gap between impression and understanding (Watt: 355).

Marlow experiences the event as happening in a dream situation or in trance: "the poleman gives up the business suddenly, and stretches himself flat on the deck", "at the same time the fireman" "sat down abruptly before his furnace and ducked his head" (149). Marlow, totally confused, notices that "sticks, little sticks, were flying about – thick: they were whizzing before [his] nose, dropping below [him], striking behind [him] against [his] pilot-house" (149). And more amazing, while "these things" flew around on the boat, "all this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet – perfectly quiet" (149). A little later Marlow is able to identify that what he sees are arrows, and he understands that the boat is under attack.

Under extreme stress people often try to protect themselves by refusing to comprehend what exactly is going on. A series of incomprehensible, apparently unconnected events unfolds before Marlow: under the attack "the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze colour" (149), "a voice screamed". The pilgrims react by opening fire with their Winchesters "simply

squirting lead into that bush” (149) and they make the situation even worse because the smoke makes navigation very difficult. “Something big” appears and “that thing” results in the helmsman’s “rifle went overboard, and the man stepped back swiftly, ... and fell upon [Marlow’s] feet” (150). Unable to feel the stress, Marlow is still trying to navigate and at last he reacts adequately when, with one hand, he reaches for the steam-whistle and its sudden, loud sound puts an end to the attack. He is now aware that the helmsman is dead and curiously he thinks about Kurtz: “And, by the way, I suppose Mr Kurtz is dead as well by this time” (151) and for the moment it becomes his dominant thought.

## **Words**

This thought of “extreme disappointment” (151) comes to Marlow while he is engaged on the absurd task (a reaction to extreme stress) of throwing his shoes overboard. He becomes suddenly aware of that his sole purpose with this dangerous journey is to talk with Kurtz. To his surprise he discovers also that he “had never imagined him as doing, ... but as discoursing” (151-152). “The man presented himself as a voice” (152) although Marlow has already heard that Kurtz “had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together” (152). Marlow is convinced that Kurtz is “a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words – the gift of expression” (152).

“The words are effective only in so far as they convey a meaning or have a significance. It is their meaning which is effective. But ‘meaning’ is something mental or spiritual” (Jung: 229). This is what makes words “the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light” (125).

Without meaning, without spirituality, words become “the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness” (152). A sudden fear that the opportunity to talk with Kurtz is lost seizes Marlow, “the gift has vanished” (152) and this fact causes a feeling of “lonely desolation” (152); Marlow feels like he “missed [his] destiny in life” (152).

Marlow does not at this point understand how absurd this fact is; this understanding comes to him later on. It is obvious that the recollection elicits strong feelings in Marlow. He interrupts his story by asking for some tobacco thus allowing his narratees and the reader to pause a little. The frame narrator takes over temporarily, commenting the “profound stillness” that marks the narrative situation. Marlow resumes his story by admitting to his listeners the absurdity of throwing a new pair of shoes in “the devil-god of that river” (152) thinking about his lost opportunity to talk with Kurtz while his reaction should be to shed some tears over the archaic man who lies dead by his feet. Although the archaic man departs from him, he is not forgotten; he has shown what kind of help he can offer and now his mission is over.

Marlow was wrong about his lost opportunity to meet Kurtz: “the privilege was waiting for [him]” (153), he had had the chance to listen to Kurtz’s talk; and he “heard more than enough” (153). He had the privilege to listen to Kurtz’s voice, although Kurtz appeared to be only one voice among others. Marlow has not only heard Kurtz, “him – it – this voice” (153) but he has heard “other voices” as well. “All of them were so little more than voices and the memory of that time itself lingers around me, impalpable, like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense. Voices, voices – even the girl herself – now – He was silent for a long time” (153). What were all these voices Marlow has heard? They were apparently the voices of all the people he met in Africa

talking about ivory trading. They were the voices of the new, unknown people on board too or on the riverbanks during his travelling in the wilderness. They were also the voices from the world he has left behind. During the course of his life, a person hears many voices; perhaps he listens to some and overhears others. In the same manner he listens to some voices from within and chooses to overhear others.

## Chapter IV. The Shadow

### The wilderness

When Marlow starts narrating again his speech seems disturbed and without cohesion: He says that he “laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie” (153). He has mentioned that he detests lies but he has lied already because he thought that his lie would help Kurtz. He lies again for Kurtz but this time he does this to protect a woman from suffering. When it comes to the “girl” one “should have heard the disinterred body of Mr Kurtz saying, “My Intended.” (153). “And the lofty frontal bone of Mr Kurtz! They say the hair goes on growing sometimes,” as on corpses, (214) “but this – ah – specimen, was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball – an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and ... 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. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite” (153).

Kayerts and Carrier, “two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals” in Conrad’s “An Outpost of Progress” lose their courage, composure, confidence, emotions and principles when suddenly “left unassisted to face the wilderness” “a wilderness rendered more strange, more incomprehensible by the mysterious glimpses of the vigorous life it contained” (OP: 5). This contact with “pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man, brings sudden and profound trouble into the heart” (OP: 5). One is left alone in the “loneliness of one’s thoughts”; the safety of the habitual is challenged by the unusual “which is dangerous” and vague, uncontrollable and repulsive things intrude, excite the imagination and try “the civilised nerves of the foolish and the wise alike” (OP: 5). What happens to man when

he is disconnected from his known surroundings and is left alone with his thoughts is a theme that Conrad has explored in his work. What has happened to Kurtz can be understood better by reading the story of Kayerts and Carlier.

Marlow tells about Kurtz's absurd claims of on the world: "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my –" everything belonged to him (153) but his claims would make "the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter ..." (153). Kurtz demonstrates here the absurdity of man's vanity and his groundless claims that fade in front of the powers of nature, his own unconscious. "Everything belonged to him – but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. That was the reflection that made you creepy all over" (153-154). Kurtz had submerged into the unconscious, the powers of darkness, and made it his way of life. He "had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land" (154) but in doing this he gave himself to many powers of darkness. To be able to understand that such a thing is possible, one should be in Kurtz's place, says Marlow, because it is impossible to comprehend it if man has never experienced it. Marlow means that any human being could be able to act like Kurtz because all human beings carry the powers of darkness within and can submit to them given the right conditions.

In "An Outpost of Progress", Conrad states the reasons why such a situation appears: "Few men realise that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. ... Every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but ... to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion" (OP: 5).

## **The social life of the West**

In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow expresses the same opinion by stating that ordinary people manage to conduct a safe life because they have a “solid pavement under their feet”, and are “surrounded by kind neighbours” (154). The control imposed by one’s own social environment, and by public opinion with its approval or disapproval, makes it comparatively easy to live in a correct, socially approved way. Man lacks the inner guidance which springs from knowledge of moral rules of conduct which are expressed by a man’s free choice of action. It is this kind of psychological insight that broadens man’s knowledge about himself and others; with this knowledge man is free to choose a moral conduct based on a person’s free will and not on his fear of his social institutions. A civilization based on fear lacks the strength to sustain itself when it loses control over its members.

How can a person living under the guidance of public opinion understand that it is possible for someone to enter a “particular region of the first ages” “by the way of utter solitude”, “by the way of utter silence”, “where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion” (154)? “These little things make all the great difference” (154) and it is something nobody understands until he “must fall back upon [his] own innate strength, upon [his] own capacity for faithfulness” (154). When it is the safety and knowledge of one’s own surroundings that saves a person by suggesting the right way of life, it is the obedience to an external influence and not to one’s own strength and wisdom that becomes important. Man is not aware that he has lost his freedom to choose to adopt his own values. Man is not even aware that when left alone to choose he can make a moral decision but he can also choose not to do so.

As already mentioned, Conrad has used Marlow as a narrator in other works as well. Marlow, the narrator in *Lord Jim*, 'goes' "upon circumstantial evidence" and declares: "I am willing to believe each of us has a guardian angel, if you fellows will concede to me that each of us has a familiar devil as well. ... He is there right enough" (LJ: 32). It is very difficult to tell whom an individual will obey unless the individual frees himself from social control. Choosing to do as his "familiar devil" suggests, man comes into the darkness but then he must be man enough to handle it.

"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" "or you may be such a thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds". "But most of us are neither one nor the other. The earth for us is a place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells too, by Jove! – breathe dead hippo, so to speak, and not be contaminated" (154).

In other words: to live among people and, although coming in touch with their 'evil' side, try to behold the belief in man's 'good' side as well. Marlow apparently manages to "breathe dead hippo" "and not be contaminated"; he manages to make the choice of trying to balance the powers of light and darkness in himself. In order to succeed he needs strength, faith in his ability, and devotion to "an obscure, back-breaking business" "and that's difficult enough" (154). He succeeds in this because, as Jung explains, when man is turned to his inner being after experiencing distress and the need for guidance, the destructive powers of the unconscious are transformed into healing powers. "The archetypes come to independent life and serve as spiritual guides for the personality". These archetypes are the images Marlow describes throughout the novella. The fact that they become healing powers to assist him is shown in that the same images are available to all the whites in Africa, but only Marlow pays attention to them. Their interference supports and strengthens his ego, which is inadequate in the effort to defend itself against the "darkness" (Jung: 247).

The process of transformation begins when, typically in dreams or fantasies, the individual experiences themes that cannot be attributed to consciousness. Something strange appears that is not the 'I' and this fact indicates that man has gained access to the sources of psychic life, a fact that marks the beginning of the cure (Jung: 248).

### **A further acquaintance with Kurtz**

Although Marlow has not yet met Kurtz he describes him in a way that suggests a thorough knowledge of his character. What is remarkable here is the naming of Kurtz as the “initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere” and “it” that suggests an object not a person. Marlow seems to make a distinction between “the original Kurtz” and “it” (154), the person he meets at the Inner Station. Educated in England, Kurtz has been entrusted by the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs to write a report “for its future guidance” (154-155) which he did. As a man, Kurtz is uncommon: “he had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour; [and] he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings” (155-156). His report “was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence”, an “unbounded power of eloquence – of words – of burning noble words” suggesting that the whites “by the simple exercise of [their] will ... can exert a power for good practically unbounded” (155). Kurtz’s report is a masterpiece of eloquence, of empty words without suggesting a practical method for the application of the will for good. But all this was before “his – let us say – nerves, went wrong” (155); the manuscript indicates that Kurtz’s nerves went wrong when he suggests a method for practical application: “Exterminate all the brutes!” (155).

After “his nerves went wrong” Kurtz presided “at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites” (155). Robert Hampson suggests that “Kurtz’s ‘evil’ is

signaled by his 'going native' (Hampson 1995: xxxv). The discourse gives no such indication, however, if Kurtz 'went native' he would have lived in *participation mystique* with the wilderness, the unconscious. He would have lived in the realm of the instincts together with the archaic man and it have appeared right to both parties. But Kurtz enters the wilderness as a white man with the ambitions and the values of the society he belongs to: "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my – everything belonged to him" (153). Living in the wilderness he steals as much ivory as possible in order to earn money and a promotion. He brings with him the power of the products of his civilization and he exploits this power in order to increase his own: he meets the natives "with thunder and lightening" (162) and he uses the products of his civilization to inflict a harsh punishment on those who disobey him.

The freedom he experiences being away from the restrictions of civil society increases his egocentrism and makes him believe that he can do anything he wants; he can kill anyone because "he could do so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly pleased" (163). He robs the nature and the natives, depriving them from their own resources. As a person he represents the accumulation of traits that are routinely condemned in the West: ruthlessness, deception, greed, brutality and misuse of power. Thus he becomes the dark-side, the shadow of the European man. Marlow refers to the manager and his uncle as "two ridiculous shadows of unequal length" as is the case with the average man (136); but these "shadows" cannot match Kurtz; his actions are not "ridiculous" but they are cruel, showing him casting a much longer and darker shadow. Living in a world ruled by rational laws, the European believes that he is always rational as well. He is not allowed to act out his impulses, which are rejected and repressed in the unconscious until they surface under the right conditions.

Kurtz's extraordinary personality with its strength and ability to act in both ways – with and without “restraint”, with and without a “method” makes Kurtz a man Marlow cannot forget; it is a fascinating thought to give oneself away to the satisfaction of urges that are forbidden but still exist. Despite his fascination Marlow acknowledges the true nature of Kurtz and his actions when he states that Kurtz was not worth the life of the helmsman lost on the way to get him. Marlow says he misses the helmsman because “he had done something, he had steered; for months [Marlow] had him at [his] back – a help – an instrument” (156).

Marlow approaches the archaic man in a different way than Kurtz. He wisely allows the archaic man to stand by him and guide him in the dangerous sphere of the unconscious. As Jung states, it is wisdom to understand the primordial images of the unconscious and learn to live with them (Jung: 115). Man does not need to become archaic himself because he has gone further in his development but to acknowledge that the archaic man is in him and can act as a guide is what Jung considers as wisdom. It is this healthy, healing affirmation of “partnership” and “distant kinship” (156) with the archaic man which is going to provide Marlow with a cure. In declaring his longing for the helmsman Marlow indicates that he has assimilated the part of himself that connects him to the common human past.

### **The Russian**

In the wilderness Marlow encounters a young man who looks very strange in his patched clothes that make him resemble a harlequin. He happens not only to know Kurtz but to have listened to him as well; “you don't talk with that man – you listen to him” (159). He tells Marlow that Kurtz has “enlarged” his mind with his words because “when one is young one must see things, gather experience, ideas; enlarge the

mind” (159). The young Russian, “had started for the interior with a light heart, and no more idea of what would happen to him than a baby” (159). He represents the image of youth; he is not afraid of anything and he embarks on life trying to experience and learn as much as possible. His search brings him to strange places and to strange people and he accepts them because of the learning opportunities they provide. This young Westerner is perhaps the image of young Marlow. After all the first-narrator has informed the reader that Marlow is a wanderer, and Marlow himself has admitted that he travelled a lot and has visited many places. Marlow “looked at him, lost in astonishment” (161). “There he was” and “he was an insoluble problem. It was inconceivable how he had existed, how he had succeeded in getting so far, how he managed to remain” (161).

Young people in the “morning of life” want to learn, pursue concrete goals and learn to live as socially adapted persons. During their journey they are willing to go far, driven by their curiosity and ignoring the dangers of travel. Still “lost in astonishment”, Marlow looks at the young man, feeling a kind of admiration or may be envy for his courage and freedom. This young person seems to handle the realm of the unconscious much better than the older one, Kurtz, because what he just wants is “space to breathe in and to push on through” (161). In the wilderness he encounters the shadow-side of man as well, but this contact does not appear to have caused him any harm: “It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism” (161).

He keeps on talking about Kurtz, explaining how he had talked with Kurtz about everything, about love in general too. Kurtz’s influence on this young man is obvious, he states that Kurtz made him see things that he had not seen before. He has nevertheless not been together with Kurtz the whole time; their encounter with each other was often interrupted by their different tasks and their different ways of life.

Looking around him, Marlow suddenly becomes aware that “never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to [him] so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness” (162). He notices that Kurtz filled the life, occupied the thoughts and influenced the emotions of this young man. Sharing the thought with the youth, he learns that it is very natural: “One cannot judge Kurtz as one would judge an ordinary man (162). The surprising conclusion of his tale is that “this man suffered too much. He hated all this, and somehow he couldn’t get away” (163).

Turning his attention to the nature around them, Marlow notices that

“there was no sign on the face of nature of this amazing tale that was not so much told as suggested to me in desolate exclamations, completed by shrugs, in interrupted phrases, in hints ending in deep sighs. The woods were unmoved, like a mask – heavy, like the closed door of a prison – they looked with their air of hidden knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable silence” (163).

Once again nature is silent in front the “jabbering” of man and this silence comes not out of ignorance; Marlow’s impression that the woods waited patiently to reveal something is confirmed by the sight in front of his glasses.

What Marlow has apprehended as ornamental “round knobs” are actually human skulls on stakes “under Mr Kurtz’s windows” (165). “There was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there” (164) is Marlow’s perplexed first reaction; he seems unable to comprehend this meaningless brutality because it does not serve Kurtz’s need for profit from his trading activities; it does not seem to serve any reasonable need at all. Marlow did not recognize the heads at first: delayed decoding or inability to accept that Mr Kurtz, a civilized human being could do such a thing only because he lacked restraint. The sight of the heads reveals an unexpected characteristic of Kurtz’s personality that does not fit the picture of the man with

ideals: the heads on the stakes reveal a ruthlessness that fits better in the world of the primitive savage man of earlier times.

Is lack of restraint enough to explain the killing and the unrespectful treating of dead human beings? The hungry, cannibal crew has succeeded in demonstrating restraint, but a civilized man with ideals reveals himself unable to match them. Marlow cannot find an explanation, he only concludes that “there was something wanting in him – some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence” (164). The knowledge of this “small matter” came to Kurtz “at last – only at the very last” (164). But it was too late, until then “the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it 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 – and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core” (164-165) confirming the popular saying that “the empty vessel makes the greatest sound” (215).

What Kurtz could have learned about himself is the knowledge that he, as a human being, has a dualistic nature. He is capable of both good and evil because living in a developed Continent does not mean that evil actions have been erased for good. There are still there and being an educated, idealistic individual does not protect anyone from the fascination of the unconscious. May be the silence of the wilderness has made Kurtz aware of the fact of the existence of “a guardian angel” and “a familiar devil” in him (the conscious and the unconscious realm of the human psyche) and the possibility of his own free choice beyond the control of his “good neighbours”. What Kurtz has at last understood is that he accepted the guidance of his

“familiar devil”; he chose to live in accordance with the contents of his unconscious mind that are unaccepted by his society; and he did so without external pressure.

The Russian keeps on talking about Kurtz and he looks eager to tell more, but Marlow is unable to hear more. What Kurtz has done in his encounters with the inhabitants of the wilderness seems to Marlow even worse than the sight of the dead heads on the stakes. “After all, that was only a savage sight, while [Marlow] seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief, being something that had a right to exist – obviously – in the sunshine” (165). This is the world of the unconscious mind containing early memories of past savagery. Long ago, when man was still submerged in the unconscious, living in *participation mystique* with nature, his instinctive savagery was uncomplicated: it was an integral part of him and thus had the right to be acknowledged. It brings to mind the violence without pretence that characterized the Romans. They lived and ruled at a time when man was closer to his instinctive nature. But as a result of having developed a civilization with values and guidance to a moral conduct of life, savagery should disappear.

What Marlow defines as “uncomplicated savagery” is not uncomplicated after all: The skulls on the stakes are the skulls of “rebels”; there is a perverse rationale behind this action that it makes it complicated. It is this need for a definition that marks the ‘civilized’ part of this action. The Africans were defined as enemies before they were shot at and the people in the grove of death were defined as inefficient; in this respect Kurtz’s actions are quite similar to the actions performed by the other whites. The difference lies in that Kurtz raised the skulls on stakes, making his actions visible and subjected to judgement while at the Station the actions are hidden in a grove. As long as the unconscious is a natural part of man, savagery, which has

always been with man, can become a possibility; it can appear in man's actions, because, being an integral part of man's history, it is stored in the collective unconscious. Moral guidance should point to the conscious accept of this possibility and the choice of following conscious alternatives for action. What goes wrong in the West is the belief that savagery has totally disappeared and has been replaced by civilized morals. It is this denial that gives strength to the unconscious and increases the danger of its taking control over consciousness. This insight is a significant feature of the literary thematic of *Heart of Darkness*.

As Marlow again turns to nature, the Russian's "voice lost itself in the calm of the evening. The long shadows of the forest had slipped down ... All this was in the gloom, while we down there were yet in the sunshine, ... Not a living soul was seen on the shore. The bushes did not rustle" (165-6). Standing in the sunshine of his consciousness, Marlow becomes increasingly aware of the fact of the duality he has sensed so far. Kurtz's true nature becomes more and more clear to him. Nature is silent again, but the river seems to glitter "in a still and dazzling splendour", reflecting [a] glimpse of truth about Kurtz.

### **Meeting Kurtz**

At last Marlow meets Kurtz who "appeared as though [he] had come up from the ground" (166) carried forth on an improvised stretcher. His entrance is marked by a cry "whose shrillness pierced the still air like a sharp arrow flying straight to the very heart of the land" (166). "And, as if by enchantment, streams of human beings – of naked human beings- with spears in their hands, with bows, with shields, with wild glances and savage movements, were poured into the clearing by the dark-faced and pensive forest. The bushes shook, the grass swayed for a time, and then everything

stood still in attentive immobility” (166). The sight of the people and the danger they represent make Marlow resent “bitterly the absurd danger of [his] situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonouring necessity” (166).

What he sees next is the picture of something that executes some movements that reverse the situation: “the thin arm extended commandingly, the lower jaw moving, the eyes of that apparition shining darkly far in its bony head that nodded with grotesque jerks” (166).

And this “something” is Kurtz; he appears as “an animated image of death carved out of old ivory”, and as he opens his mouth wide to control the “motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze” (166) he gives the impression of having “a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him” (166). Kurtz does not seem exhausted by disease; on the contrary, “this shadow looked satiated and calm, as though for the moment it had had its fill of all the emotions” (167). He talked “almost without the trouble of moving his lips” (167) and Marlow meets at last the person whom he has imagined as a voice; the voice is still present although he who owns it seems almost incapable of speaking.

Marlow notices the “dark human shapes” “out in the distance” (167). Among them he identifies the figure of “a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman” (167) “savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent” (168). She stood there as an image of “the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose” (168). Achebe has commented this presentation of the African woman, who he considers as Conrad’s need to create a counterpart to the European woman who appears later in the novel (Achebe 2006: 341). Like the other Africans in the novel, she is also deprived of speech, showing again the difference between civilized and primitive persons.

What Achebe does not mention is that her body language is as expressive as words can be. Moreover, this woman expresses sorrow for a man whom she knows very well; the sorrow expressed in words by her 'civilized counterpart' is sorrow for an ideal and not a real person.

The manager's approach draws Marlow's thoughts out of the realm of the wilderness and its inhabitants. The manager's talk brings him back to the realm of civilized concerns: he is worried that Kurtz is causing harm to the Company because his actions lack restraint. The result is that the district is closed for a time and trade is damaged as a result. This happens because Kurtz's method is "unsound". Marlow reacts to the naming of the method as "unsound" because he cannot see any method in Kurtz's actions. The manager agrees, pointing out that everything shows a want of judgement and he must report to the "proper quarter" (169). It is obvious that the manager and Marlow talk about different things and judge different things. What is damage to the trade for the manager is the revelation of brutal actions to Marlow. The manager judges Kurtz as a trading agent while Marlow judges him as a human being.

Understanding that the manager is blind to what occurs at Kurtz's station, Marlow thinks that he has "never breathed an atmosphere so vile" and he turns "mentally to Kurtz for relief". Marlow's statement that he thinks is "Mr Kurtz is a remarkable man" shocks the manager who turns his back to Marlow (169). With this statement Marlow distances himself from the Company and all that it represents. By doing so he finds himself "lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe: [he] was unsound! Ah! but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmares" (169). Marlow's choice is between the nightmare of being a part of brutality and destruction clothed in idealism and profit and the

comparable nightmare of being in the world of the early ages when savagery was uncomplicated and justified.

At the moment, Marlow chooses the realm of the wilderness; he chooses to accept the existence of the unconscious mind of which he himself is a part. His shocking experience has revealed to him that Kurtz is also a part of Marlow himself, but this part should only be acknowledged and not acted out. Again Marlow has to face the “darkness of an impenetrable night” (170). Marlow recognizes that he has also turned to the wilderness. Seeing the place, the unconscious, Marlow accepts its contents and stands before a choice: he can either submerge deep into the unconscious, as Kurtz did, or he must fight against its fascination. The latter is what is going to save him and help him return to a conscious state enriched with the contents of his unconscious mind. This is what is going to transform him to a human being with a richer life in his own society.

In the meantime the Russian, Marlow’s image of his younger self, is ready “for a renewed encounter with the wilderness” (171) and his being there still surprises Marlow who wonders whether it was possible to meet “such a phenomenon” (171). But it was; the Russian appeared as a memory of the young, fearless Marlow and has reminded him of his strength and his previously lack of fear. He has also provided additional knowledge about Kurtz, thus preparing Marlow for his encounter with him. He has also demonstrated that it is possible to be near Kurtz without being submerged into his world.

“A steady droning sound of many men chanting each to himself some weird incantation [coming] out from the black, flat wall of the woods as the humming of bees comes out of a hive”, “had a strange narcotic effect upon [Marlow’s] half-awake senses” (171). He dozes off but he awakes by “an abrupt burst of yells, an

overwhelming outbreak of a pent-up and mysterious frenzy” (171) and he finds out that Kurtz has gone. Shocked by the discovery and unable to accept the fact at first, Marlow decides to go out alone to find Kurtz. Although there is one agent there who can assist Marlow in finding Kurtz, Marlow feels that he is unwilling to share this experience with someone else. His reason for doing so is that he does not want to betray Kurtz; “it was ordered” that he “should never betray him” “it was written” that Marlow “should be loyal to the nightmare of [his] choice” (172). Marlow is “anxious to deal with this shadow by [him]self alone” (172), although he has never been able to explain why he was so jealous “of sharing with any one the peculiar blackness of that experience” (172).

A kind of understanding about the nature of the shadow is shown in Marlow’s thought that “he is crawling on all-fours” (172) like an animal or a weakened human being. The shadow has lost its power and stands there at the end of Marlow’s journey into the unknown. Now Marlow’s next task is to handle the shadow. He remembers the exaltation he felt as he rushed out alone to find Kurtz. He is able to think clearly, he plans to circumvent Kurtz, and he is sure that he is going to succeed, in spite of “some imbecile thoughts” (172). The confrontation with the shadow is extremely difficult and there is always the danger of perishing if man cannot handle it in the right way. The danger of the situation is given in the memory of “the knitting old woman with the cat” (172), the image of fate and death.

In the meantime he is aware of “a row of pilgrims squirting lead in the air out of Winchesters” (172) and although he is a member of this group, Marlow imagines himself “living alone and unarmed in the woods to an advanced age” (172). He feels tempted to cut himself loose from the pilgrims’ world and values and hide himself in the wilderness permanently. He is tempted to remain in the unconscious, living in

“uncomplicated savagery” for the rest of his life. Marlow becomes aware that the thought is just “such silly things” (172) that usually come to everyone. This is the danger of encountering the shadow and feeling the fascination of the possibilities it represents.

At the same time Marlow notices that his heart is beating confounded with the beating of the drums and what was more important: he feels pleased “at its calm regularity” (172). Marlow’s choice of nightmares has brought him at the point of tearing himself loose from the bounds and limits of his conscious living; he has found the unconscious elements in himself and he is at the point of conquering and of coming to terms with them. His conscious personality is his guide at this moment, making him “strangely cocksure of everything that night” (172). He circumvents Kurtz and stands before his own shadow, the shadow of the Western man as well.

### **The struggle**

In confronting Kurtz Marlow is aware of the danger of the situation: there were still some elements that were connected to Kurtz, “a black figure ... [with] horns ... on its head ... [that] looked fiend-like enough” (172). But this does not stop Marlow: although he does not like fights, he sees the need and he is determined “to beat that Shadow – this wandering and tormented thing” (173). “One gets sometimes such a flash of inspiration” and Marlow is able to think very clear and manage to “say the right thing” (173). This is the result of the workings of the archetypes that have been transformed in spiritual guides and healing forces at the disposition of man who has proved “man enough” to face and acknowledge them. Marlow is aware that he must beat the Shadow by overcoming its destructive influence, but still he has to acknowledge and accept it as a part of himself. He must assimilate all that the Shadow

represents without denying it. It is assimilation and not denial (the killing) of the shadow which leads eventually to a successful transformation.

While the “Shadow” tries to justify its existence, Marlow attempts to understand it and “break the spell – the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness – that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions.” (173-174). It is the spell of unlimited freedom and unlimited power that cannot be found inside the boundaries of an organized society. Marlow “had to deal with a being to whom [he] could not appeal in the name of anything high or low”, a being with “nothing either above or below him” (174) because “he had kicked himself loose of earth”. Kurtz was man enough to “kick himself loose” of his corrupted imperialist world but he was not man enough to choose a moral replacement to it. Marlow is aware that the words he uses to describe his meeting with the unconscious cannot express the feelings and the meaning of the situation. Man uses “common everyday words, - the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that?” (174) Still, they cannot show what lies behind them; these words lose their meaning because the concepts they reveal are not a part of everyday expression in a society using words to express materialism.

Marlow becomes aware of the seriousness and the significance of his situation: what stands before him, what confronts him is not a “thing” but a “Soul” (144). The “Soul” that stands before Marlow is another human being; this means that, being a human being, the “Soul” is characterized by intelligence, strength and even moral; and as a human being he is responsible for his actions no matter how cruel they are. Marlow has to face and even struggle with the Soul. He is confronted with the dark side of the human soul, this part which man gladly forgets but which is there

nevertheless. Man must struggle in order to free himself from its spell. And the soul is strong; it is not a lunatic, it is something intelligent but still it has to be conquered.

The soul standing before Marlow “was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad”.

Kurtz “struggled with himself, too” His soul that “knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear”, yet struggled “blindly with itself” (174), his human nature. In front of him Marlow manages to keep his head “pretty well” (174) and although he feels that this unfamiliar encounter with the darkness taxes his powers, he accomplishes the task successfully.

### **Kurtz's death**

“The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress” (176). The manager and the pilgrims are content with the “affair” settled down in an appropriate manner but Marlow feeling estranged from their company expects them treating him as one of “the party of “unsound method”” (176). Distancing himself from them and what they represent he retires into the loneliness of himself and his newly won experience. He spends his time with Kurtz: he has after all not killed the Shadow, because he did not see any purpose to it and he made the right decision. He tries to understand who Kurtz really is. This choice of company results in him being “numbered with the dead” (176) in the eyes of the pilgrims but Marlow does not care. He has accepted “this choice of nightmares forced upon [him] in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms” (176).

“Kurtz discoursed” (176) revealing that “the wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now – images of wealth and fame revolving

obsequiously round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas – these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments” (176). During his struggle with death Kurtz appears frequently as the man he was before, the contrast between him and the image of “the hollow sham” he is now. “The hollow sham” is going to be left behind “buried presently in the mould of primeval earth” (176) while the memory of the original Kurtz is going to live after him in the memories of his Intended. Marlow, on the other hand, is going to remember not only the shadow but his own experience of meeting it.

“His was an impenetrable darkness” (177). Marlow is unable to understand Kurtz, what happened to him and why. He is unable to understand the connection between the “remarkable man” and the “man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines” (177). What happens to the dying Kurtz becomes a shocking experience for Marlow: “Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again”. “That ivory face” expresses “sombre pride”, “ruthless power”, “craven terror” and “an intense and hopeless despair” as though “a veil had been rent” (177) without revealing the truth that lies behind it. At the moment of his death Kurtz “cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision, - he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath. “The horror! The horror!”” (177).

On hearing about Kurtz’s death all the pilgrims rush out to take a look while Marlow remains seated at the dinner table. Although “there was a lamp in there ” “outside ... was so beastly, beastly dark” (178). Marlow won a victory over the dark side of man but the darkness has not disappeared; it is still there and can still be felt. Self-insight and knowledge are needed to be able to see the whole man, but still he needs strength to be able to face the fact of his duality. However, it is not clear what

man sees and apprehends; the veil is torn but it does not reveal the truth. For Marlow “the voice was gone [but he is still unable to see] what else had been there.” (178).

“But ... next day the pilgrims buried *something* in a muddy hole. And then they very nearly buried me” (178).

“Destiny. ... Droll thing life is – that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself – that comes too late – a crop of unextinguishable regrets” (178). The result of acquiring “some knowledge” of oneself can also be death: not death literally speaking but the death of the ‘old self’ beliefs about the world and oneself, values that one cherishes, trust in others. All these can ‘die’ and leave one alone and insecure. When, as Marlow rightly points out, man manages to gain some knowledge of himself, this knowledge comes too late, and there is always the risk that it is knowledge about one’s accumulated wrong doings. Where can man turn to for comfort, for receiving an explanation, for help to carry on? The fight with one’s own self “is the most unexciting contest you can imagine” (178). Like fighting death, it is a fight against an invisible enemy, and the fight against oneself becomes the hardest of all fights. Marlow has to face and accept the fact that he is a person with a light and a dark side, while at the same time he is associated with all the other persons who also are possessed of a dark and a light side. “If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be” (178).

Marlow feels that he was close enough to a “last opportunity for pronouncement” (178) and he is shocked by the fact that he could not find much to say. He feels that after all Kurtz had something to say and he said it, thus proving that he was a remarkable man. Kurtz had “summed up – he had judged”. “The horror!” (179). What Kurtz has judged is left open for discussion, as are the words “The

horror! The horror!” Did he pass a judgement upon the European civilization that proves unable to sustain itself when it loses control over its members? Or is it a judgement on the European who, lacking inner moral guidance, acts in an approved way because he fears his institutions? Or is it a judgement on the pretence of civilization hiding its cruel actions behind definitions? Or is it a judgement on human nature capable of such evil? Or is it a judgement upon himself and his life?

“True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible” (179). Marlow affirms the shadow in himself, an affirmation that points to his widening of consciousness as a result of a series of painful experiences. He confesses to his listeners and to the reader that as a human being, he is not different from Kurtz. Marlow understands that he might have performed the same actions as Kurtz if he were in his place. In the same manner, anyone is able to perform Kurtz’s actions if one is exposed under the same conditions as Kurtz; evil is a part of human nature in the same way as good is.

### **Back to the sepulchral city**

The pilgrims did not bury Marlow, he has been through a long and dangerous journey and he has survived. The journey has left him physically and psychologically exhausted, disillusioned but also wiser. He has experienced that his “world of straightforward facts” has broken down without leaving another better world to replace it. At the Station he has experienced that science and technology are beneficent to man, but he has also learnt that they can also be used in a way that

brings forth demoralization and destruction. At the Central Station the word ivory has almost religious status, and the activities of the people there are an effort to prevent each other from acquiring the precious ivory. The man with ideals of some sort has proved himself alarmingly as hollow, and his eloquence has not produced any word worthy of expression. The culmination of his wisdom is “The horror!” and he, the “something” left of him, is at last buried in the primeval mud.

Marlow finds himself “back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant dreams” (179). The old, known world of consciousness looks like a strange foreign world to one who has just emerged from darkness. These people annoy Marlow because he detects in them a lack of knowledge of the truth that their life is built on pretence; they do not know the actual facts and even worse, they are not interested to know either. They are just “commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety” (179) and Marlow knows that if their “perfect safety” is taken away from them, they are going to perish as well. Marlow admits that he was “not very well at that time” because his “imagination ... wanted soothing” (179-180) and again the attendance of common affairs comes to his rescue by allowing time to pass and heal.

In the sepulchral city Marlow tries to find out who Kurtz were. What he discovers is that Kurtz “was a universal genius”, “that man could talk!”, “he would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party”, “any party” (181). Marlow himself infers that Kurtz “wasn’t rich enough or something” and “it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there” (184). This image of Kurtz shows

Conrad's scepticism about European civilization and his pessimistic view of human nature; Marlow's disillusionment is also Conrad's.

Marlow decides to visit the girl, Kurtz's Intended, with a mixture of curiosity and a feeling of obligation towards Kurtz. What remained of Kurtz were his memory and his Intended, and Marlow is totally aware that he needs to give them up too. Like the archaic man who departs when his function is over, the shadow should also depart only after he has finished all the work to which it is linked.

Marlow meets the girl and they talk about Kurtz. "But with every word spoken the room was growing darker" and her "unextinguishable light of belief and love" (184) made the darkness deeper. The girl's memories of Kurtz surprise Marlow who hears about a person remarkably unlike the person he met in the wilderness. This discrepancy makes Kurtz's person and his past an even a greater mystery to Marlow and his listeners.

Marlow thoughtlessly mentions that he has heard Kurtz's last words and the girl wants to hear them. Shocked by the peculiar situation and the request, Marlow emerges into his own thoughts or nightmares about Kurtz's last words which have haunted him since Kurtz's death. Eventually, he manages to pull himself together and he chooses to lie to her by saying that Kurtz's last words were her name. The reason for lying is his wish not to include her in the darkness that surrounds Kurtz's story. He "could not tell her. It would have been too dark – too dark altogether..." (186).

### **The end**

By way of closing the narrative the frame narrator takes over: "Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. Nobody moved for a time" (186). His narrative has a different impact on his listeners; while the

Director remarks that they “have lost the first of the ebb” (186), the frame narrator responds differently: “I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness” (186-187). In the opening Marlow has stated that “darkness was here yesterday” (106) and the narrator’s remark about the “black bank of clouds”, “an overcast sky” and the waterway leading “into the heart of an immense darkness” confirms that.

Marlow has informed his listeners and the reader that Kurtz has summed-up. But this summing up, “The horror!”, cannot be considered as the answer Marlow seeks in Kurtz’s story. It cannot be considered as the answer which the narratees on the *Nellie* expect to hear either. It does not make sense and it does not bring sense to Marlow’s own story. Kurtz’s story is not really told and Kurtz’s voice has not expressed the words revealing the “horror”.

“The impossibility of summing-up, of giving meaning within the narrative frame explains why Marlow must retell his tale on the *Nellie* (Brooks 2006: 383). But still Marlow’s retelling cannot be considered successful because “it does not meet the standards of intelligibility sought by the first narrator. *Heart of Darkness* does not “end”” (Brooks 2006: 383) and this is one reason why it is difficult to conclude a discussion of *Heart of Darkness*. In an essay on Henry James, Conrad comments James’s nonfinal endings as: “You remain with the sense of the life still going on” (James 2006: 386) and this is also the sense one gets when finishing *Heart of Darkness*. As Conrad puts it, “the effort to narrate one’s life is never done. One must tell and tell again, hoping that one’s repetition will in turn be repeated, that one’s voice will re-echo (Conrad 2006: 386).

## Chapter V. Conclusion

After experiencing a side of his world that is difficult to comprehend and accept, Marlow needs an answer, an explanation, and he expects Kurtz to know the answer. Marlow is obsessed by the thought of meeting and talking with Kurtz because, as Jung states, “the meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction both are transformed” (Jung: 49-50).

But the necessary condition is that both persons are susceptible to influence and willing to be influenced by each other. In his thinking about Kurtz, Marlow takes no account of this condition because he does not know Kurtz; he does not know the real person behind the stories about him. And even if he were acquainted with Kurtz it is not certain that he would be able to perceive the real person and tell his story. Experience shows that such a task is very difficult if not impossible.

Conrad acknowledges this fact when, represented by his narrator Marlow, he writes: “It is when we try to grapple with another man’s intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, unconsolable, and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp” (LJ: 111). In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow says that it is not possible to know another person because the others “can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means” (131). A person’s true nature is hidden from others and thus “what [does] it matter what any one [knows] or [ignores]? The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond [anyone’s] reach, and beyond [anyone’s] power of meddling” (142).

### **The fascination with *Heart of Darkness***

The fact that *Heart of Darkness* is a tale without an end, thus insisting that the tale must be retold, partly answers the question posed in the Introduction: what makes a rather simple plot elicit so much interest and interpretation? Another reason is that Conrad's technique of using first-person narrator addressing his listeners serves to make the storytelling more direct and personal. The fascinating images, which the first narrator successfully uses to illustrate his speech, is still another point that confirms the fact. These images, which according to Jung spring from our collective unconscious, elicit a response to the reader who interprets them in accordance with his own perspective thus applying his own meaning to them. This fact is indicated by the many different interpretations of *Heart of Darkness*. It also confirms the fact that the text is read over again and again and is a continuing source of inspiration in other genres and media. It also confirms the fact that the author approaches the reader by using our ancient language, the images that are stored in our collective unconscious.

Another question posed in the Introduction is what Marlow is talking about. We are here in a position to conclude that he obviously makes an effort to convey something that lies beyond his understanding. He tries to tell another person's story and he attempts to link another person's life story to his own; both tasks are difficult enough. Marlow is also talking about European imperialism, revealing its greed and injustice. Moreover, he is also talking about human nature, about man's cruelty to man, revealing the existence of the guardian angel *and* the familiar devil in man. What he says is not only true of Conrad's life-time. Sadly, it has also proved true in the fact of two World Wars and innumerable other wars in the twentieth century. With his film *Apocalypse Now* Francis Ford Coppola showed that Conrad has expressed something that can be true beyond his own time. Conrad's ideas can be adapted and

give meaning to happenings that spring from the same human passions that have no time limits. In making *Apocalypse Now* Coppola presents a new perspective from which *Heart of Darkness* can be analysed and in this way he has generated a new interest in Conrad's text for a new generation of readers (Dryden 2006: 502).

Marlow pictures the workings of a civilization expressed in words but not in actions and what happens to individuals created inside its frame: lacking inner moral guidance, they either cross the line by acting all that is condemned in their society or they kill themselves for no apparent reason. Marlow talks about the need for "the word", for a philosophy or guidance that can support an individual during his life course. He also reveals the need for a way of life that satisfies both the materialistic and spiritual needs of man. He also demonstrates how difficult it is for a person to understand himself. Marlow dared to look within and he accepted the price for doing so. But he has at least done it.

### **The author**

There is an ongoing discussion concerning Conrad's views and ideological position in *Heart of Darkness* and he has been labelled imperialist, racist, and sexist. But there is not much discussion about his understanding of human nature. It is true that his scepticism and disillusionment is apparent in his novella, but I hope that I have shown that he also has indicated one way of knowledge: the need to look inside and try to come in terms with what can be found within. This is a demanding action but it is necessary in order to enable man to tackle the problem of evil evident in all human relations. As already mentioned, Jung states that we cannot change anything unless we accept it. We cannot change ourselves unless we accept our nature, including our capacity to commit evil acts, and accept the need for change.

In his *Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* Joseph Conrad states his aspiration as an artist is to render "justice to the visible universe by bringing to light the truth ... underlying its very aspect". His attempt is "to find ... in the facts of life what is fundamental, ... enduring and essential ... the very truth of existence". "The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal" (Conrad 2006: 279). It is exactly his attempt to seek the truth behind his characters' words that makes his work interesting and enduring.

The material which the artist uses is to be found "within himself", "in that lonely region of stress and strife", where "if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal". "His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which ... is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities" (Conrad 2006: 279-280). His task as a writer and an artist is to try "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*. That – and no more, and it is everything" (Conrad 2006: 281). This is the difficult task Marlow has undertaken. As this thesis has hopefully shown, Marlow finds the truth about himself with the help of this "lonely region of stress and strife", the region of the collective unconscious available to man.

The ideas expressed in *Heart of Darkness* have given rise to so much interest and have exerted so strong an influence on generations of readers because they are apparently ideas which spring from the collective unconscious. Such ideas become widely accepted and according to Jung, they never belong to their author; he is in a way the bond-servant of his own ideas. Ideas that are recognized as truths are always timeless, although they appear at a definite time; they arise from the realm of creative psychic life out of which the mind of the single human being grows, from a source that is not contained within one man's personal life. The author does not create them;

they create him. Ideas bring to light not only the best in us but also our insufficiencies and shortcomings and in this way we make a confession. The most subjective ideas, expressed by giving form to what is observed, are closer to nature and the living being and thus deserve to be called the truest (Jung: 117-118).

Psychology can offer material for comparison and a terminology to explain the impact of an author on his readers and for his time for that matter. According to this terminology, what appears as an author's vision is the collective unconscious (Jung: 168). When the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and influences the conscious thinking of a given age, then it becomes important to everyone living in that age (Jung: 169) and even beyond, as the case of *Heart of Darkness* indicates.

When man returns to that level of experience "in that lonely region of stress and strife" at which there is only human existence and not the individual, the state of *participation mystique*, then he becomes capable of artistic creation that goes beyond his own abilities (Jung: 176). This is the secret of every work of art and in this case the secret of Conrad's tale.

The novella shows that in the conscious world of modern man the ideals of materialism and humanity coexist with cruelty and inhumanity. According to Jung, if man turns his gaze to his terrifying world inward, he will discover chaos and darkness because science has destroyed even the refuge of the inner life (Jung: 209). In the novella the word "darkness" has elicited many interpretations; Marlow talks about the impenetrable darkness of human heart and the dark side of human nature. But, according to Jung this fact does not need to be discouraging; light needs darkness; how can we else apprehend it as light if we do not see its contrast, the darkness? (Jung: 245).

This is the reason why it “is almost a relief to come upon so much evil in the depths of our minds” (Jung: 209). It is our only way to discover that these evil things spring from our own minds; if we manage to accept this fact, we can also manage to correct ourselves. Accepting that “much of the evil in the world is due to the fact that man in general is hopelessly unconscious”, we can also accept that psychological insight into ourselves can combat this evil at its source, in ourselves (Jung: 210).

There is a law in psychology that states that whatever part of conscious life loses its importance and value the psyche will produce a compensation in the unconscious (Jung: 214). This means that when modern relativism destroys important values, the psyche will produce their equivalents (Jung: 220). Spiritual stagnation and psychic sterility create a state of mental suffering but it is exactly this suffering that brings forth creativity and psychic advance (Jung: 230). Wishes cannot alone bring forth new forms of life; they can only spring from man’s need and distress (Jung: 222).

### **The cultural impact of *Heart of Darkness***

The *Introduction* to “A Norton Critical Edition” opens with the statement that *Heart of Darkness* “is indisputably a classic text” (Armstrong: ix). It is a classic not only because its meaning has survived the passing of time but also because “readers have been able to attribute so many different meanings to it” (Armstrong: ix). The irony in this case is that it is precisely the possibility of many interpretations of *Heart of Darkness* that has elicited many attacks on the work. Conrad’s novella has been characterized as a racist, sexist, or imperialist text thus demonstrating that it can be read and understood in many ways. “Attacking and demystifying a classic text can, paradoxically, give it a new lease of life” (Armstrong: ix).

Criticism of *Heart of Darkness* has failed to pay attention to the role of the novella in shaping British public opinion about the exploitation of Africa and the treatment of Africans by Europeans. In 1904 Sir Roger Casement presented the “Congo Report” to the British Parliament trying to turn British public opinion against Leopold. Conrad wrote to Casement in December 1903 as Casement was finishing the report and wished him to succeed because “it is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerate the Congo state today. It is if the moral clock had been put back many hours”. The leader of the Congo Reform Association in Britain, Edmund D. Morel, used Casement’s report and Conrad’s letter of support in his campaign against Leopold’s atrocities in Congo (Armstrong: xi).

The relevance of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is apparent in the allusions to the story in media and in culture in general. Hillis Miller’s essay in the Norton Critical Edition poses the question: *Should we read Heart of Darkness?* In answering this question Miller proposes a reading that takes account of the fact that the novella is “a powerful exemplary revelation of the ideology of capitalist imperialism, including its racism and sexism”. Reading *Heart of Darkness* in this way we can agree with Miller’s answer to his own question: yes: “*Heart of Darkness* should be read and ought to be read” (Miller 2006: 474).

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