



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in
Lingue Moderne per la Comunicazione e la Cooperazione Internazionale
Classe LM-38

Tesi di Laurea

CONRAD's *Heart of Darkness*

Relatore
Prof. Francesco Giacobelli
Correlatore
Prof. Antonio Covi

Laureando
Anna Maria Fazzino
n° matr.626150 / LMLCC

Anno Accademico 2012 / 2013

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	3
1. CHAPTER I – MARLOW-CONRAD: AN AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP	7
1.1. <i>Heart of Darkness</i> as an autobiographical work	8
1.1.1. Conrad’s and Marlow’s skepticism about the imperial mission	10
1.1.2. Conrad’s and Marlow’s journey into the Congo	15
1.2. <i>Heart of Darkness</i> moved away from autobiography	35
1.3. Ambiguity as <i>Heart of Darkness</i>’s key word	38
2. CHAPTER II – THE TITLE’S AMBIGUITY	41
3. CHAPTER III – KING LEOPOLD-KURTZ: BETWEEN IDEALISM AND EXPLOITATION	55
3.1. The Congo Free State and king Leopold’s “philanthropic” purpose	56
3.1.1. The enemies of the Congo Free State	68
3.2. Kurtz as a symbol of Imperialism	77
<i>Conclusion</i>	97
<i>Bibliography</i>	100

Introduction

This work is about Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a brilliant oeuvre of English literature.

As it is pervaded by intentional ambiguity, the aim would be to afford 'to bring the light' to those textual areas which, personally, appear to be truly 'dark'. In fact, if Conrad had a fear of intimacy or believed that explicitness is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, it does not follow that we cannot form a clearer, more truthful vision of the man behind the book, or most importantly of the book itself.

It will also show that not always it would be easy, because, as Ian Watt suggests, *Heart of Darkness* embodies more thoroughly than any previous fiction the posture of uncertainty and doubt.

The work is constituted of 3 chapters.

The first chapter deals with the ambiguous relationship between Conrad and his character, Marlow.

It focuses upon two points to figure out if Marlow may be, to some extent, the expression of Joseph Conrad the biographer, and it also shows that critics are profoundly divided in their views.

The first point is that, when approaching *Heart of Darkness*, one cannot but have the impression to deal with an autobiography. Marlow's journey is in fact evidently prompted by Conrad's own journey into the Congo in 1890.

Personally, the idea of an autobiographical work was reinforced when reading relevant critics defining Marlow as 'Conrad's alter ego' and *Heart of Darkness* as 'Conrad's longest journey into self.'

The present work detects and deepens two main similarities: the first is that Conrad, like Marlow, is skeptical about the imperial mission and the second is their journey into the Congo.

Far from reducing Conrad to childhood, backgrounds, relationship with parents, the work blends a few relevant elements with the Polish and the African historical context which have moulded his soul and consequently his work.

However, the second point profoundly contrasts with the former. Conrad, through various and subtle means, moves *Heart of Darkness* away from autobiography. In this way Marlow is both, at the same time that he is neither.

The thesis derives Conrad's 'ambiguity' from various factors, but the one which stands preeminently is that, according to Conrad,

explicitness destroys all illusion. The others are more intimate and are related to the narrator of *Heart of Darkness's* roots and own personality.

It might be argued that the first chapter turns out to be the most interesting, because, given the absence of a critic who exclusively deal with all the similarities between Conrad and Marlow, it composes the puzzle with all the pieces picked up now and then. The list points at giving a general knowledge of the novel without resorting to the usual and personally boring résumé, as well as in providing details which, otherwise, would not have found place in the work. It is also devised as an expedient to 'kill two birds with one stone', that is to say, in a circumscribed space, to manage to focus upon both of them and not just upon the figure of Marlow.

The second chapter deals with another dark area, the ambiguity of the title. In fact, not only has the title various meanings attached to, but also none of them is the very right one. Each component of the phrase, as well as the combination of the two nouns, turns out to be ambiguous.

The work also provides some example of Conrad's ambiguous use of religious terminology and biblical allusions in *Heart of Darkness*.

The third chapter's aim is twofold. First, it would reinforce Edmund Morel's idea that what was going on in the Congo was the old story of evil and greed and lust perpetrated upon a weaker people, and that 'never before, assuredly, has the hypocrisy with which such deeds have been cloaked, attained to heights so sublime.' Second, it would show the character of Kurtz as a symbol of Imperialism and more specifically as a personification of its 'ambiguity'/hypocrisy. If Kurtz is outstanding on many levels and he is 'an emissary of pity, and science, and progress', he has also exercised his rule with an extreme of cruelty and he has given himself to unnamable acts of lust. This time, it is not just Conrad to be 'ambiguous', but imperialism - represented in the figure of Kurtz- which moves between high idealism and exploitation. The chapter questions if it is possible to be both principled and successful in an imperialist context and it comes to the conclusion that the link between idealism and imperialism is not fortuitous, it is functional.

CHAPTER I

MARLOW-CONRAD:

AN AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP

The years from 1898 to 1902– what Conrad would come to call his Blackwood’s period –are linked with the emergence of his famous narrator Marlow, who would determine the experimental nature of his three turn-of-the-century work, *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Lord Jim*.

The work focuses upon two points to figure out if Marlow may be, to some extent, the expression of Joseph Conrad the biographer. While the first point looks at the similarities between Conrad and Marlow and, at least apparently, makes it clear they are the same person, the second completely reverses this thesis.

1.1 *Heart of Darkness* as an autobiographical work

When approaching *Heart of Darkness*, one cannot but have the impression to deal with an autobiography.

Personally, the idea of an autobiographical work, which came from the great number of resemblances detected between Marlow and Conrad, was reinforced when reading relevant critics defining Marlow as ‘Conrad’s alter ego’ and *Heart of Darkness* as “Conrad’s longest journey into self.”¹

For instance, the same Conrad’s first biographer, G. Jean-Aubry states that “the adventures which the author lends to Marlow, his mouthpiece, are no other than those of which he himself was at the same time witness and victim.”² Similarly, the critic Newhouse writes, “For those who wish to explore the way in which memories can be translated into art, Conrad offers a rich field for examination.”³ Or as Harold Bloom says, “Conrad pervades his own books, a presence not

¹ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.326.

² SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.9.

³ NEWHOUSE, N.H., 1966. *Joseph Conrad*. London: Evans Brothers Limited, pp.10.

to be put by, an elusive storyteller who yet seems to write a continuous spiritual autobiography.”⁴ We might also mention Joseph Falinski who points out that “The grim facts of the Congo, the betrayal of the ‘great cause’, the exploitation of the natives, the same events and characters, the same attitudes, are recorded both in his Congo diary and *Heart of Darkness*.”⁵

The present work detects two main similarities: the first is that Conrad, like Marlow, is skeptical about the imperial mission and the second is their journey into the Congo.

⁴ BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.4

⁵ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xv.

1.1.1 Conrad's and Marlow's skepticism about the imperial mission

The first similarity concerns Conrad's and Marlow's skepticism about the imperial mission which may derive from two factors: the partitioning of Poland and Conrad's Polish temperament.

Conrad was part of that generation leaning heavily on pastness, memory; He was employing distressing Polish memories to nourish English fictions. It meant "reliving a disastrous family situation in order to support a literary imagination."⁶ His nervous collapse at the end of this period of intense creativity has been seen as the consequence of profound involvement in personal history.

As Frederick R. Karl says, "Delving into the past was for Conrad like digging in a graveyard: not only for the particularities of his own situation, but in a more general sense for the history of the land called Poland."⁷

⁶ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.242.

⁷Ibidem, pp. 241.

Conrad was born in a Ukrainian province of Poland that had been partitioned between Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The once biggest and most powerful continental European state ceased to exist. The partition of Poland was qualified by the world as a crime. According to the same Conrad, while Prussia and Russia were not likely to carry the taint of anti-social guilt, Russia, the originator of the scheme, “had no national conscience at the time. The will of its rulers was always accepted by the people as the expression of an omnipotence derived directly from God.”⁸

In the poem written to commemorate his son’s baptism *To My Son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression*, Conrad’s father, Apollo Korzeniowski, who was an ardent Polish patriot, wrote: “My child, my son –tell yourself that you are without land, without love, without Fatherland, without humanity- as long as Poland, our Mother, is enslaved.”⁹

⁸ CONRAD, J., 1949. *Notes on Life and Letters*. London: Dent, pp.115.

⁹ CONRAD, J., and Z. NAJDER and H. CARROLL, 1964. *Conrad’s Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends*. London (etc.): Oxford University Press, pp.5.

As Leo Gurko says, “the tragedy of Poland was not only geographic, but psychological.”¹⁰; The Oppression was “affecting social relations, family life, the deepest affections of human nature, and the very fount of natural emotions”¹¹.

According to Bradbrook, Conrad suffered of a width and intensity then unknown in Western Europe “His melancholia was at times so intense that his letters make altogether intolerable reading.”¹² For instance, Conrad’s despair about Poland may be perceived in his letter to Garnett in October 1907; he wrote “You seem to forget that I am a Pole. You forget that we have been used to go to battle without illusions. It’s you Britishers that ‘go in to win’ only. We have been ‘going in’ these last hundred years repeatedly, to be knocked on the head only...”¹³

Hence, Conrad’s keen sense of the price in human terms exacted by political idealism, and, indeed, by idealism of various kinds.

¹⁰ GURKO, L., 1962. *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp.7

¹¹ CONRAD, J., 1949. *Notes on Life and Letters*. London: Dent, pp.130.

¹² BRADBROOK, M.C., 1966. *Joseph Conrad*. New York: Russell & Russell, pp.42.

¹³ GURKO, L., 1962. *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp.7.

In fact, “His birth into a European nation partitioned between Austria, Prussia, and Russia makes it appear somehow natural that Conrad could look with a critical eye on the partitioning of the world outside Europe.”¹⁴ The repressiveness of the Russian and Prussian régimes in Poland conditioned in Conrad a life-long awareness of the inequities implicit in the imposition of rule on weaker nations by the more powerful.

As previously said, the skepticism about the imperial mission may also derive from his Polish temperament. In his Preface to *A Personal Record* he would talk about the Polish temperament with its tradition of self-government, its chivalrous view of moral restraints and an exaggerated respect for individual rights. Not to mention the fact that “the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had received its training from Italy and France, and historically, had always remained, even in religious matters, in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought.”¹⁵

¹⁴ GOGOWILT, C.L., 1995. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford: Stanford university press, pp.109.

¹⁵ CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent., pp.xii.

In contrast with this, there was the Russian temperament; In *Autocracy and War* he would insist on the unbridgeable gap between Russia and the West saying that “The curse had entered her very soul; autocracy has moulded her institutions, and with the poison of slavery drugged the national temperament into the apathy of a hopeless fatalism.”¹⁶

An easy parallelism can be made. The Congo, as Poland, was a weak State oppressed by a more powerful: Belgium.

Conrad will express his attempt in his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. He wanted to present an unrestful episode in the obscure lives of a few individuals out of all the disregarded multitude of the bewildered, the simple, and the voiceless, because “There is not a place of splendor or a dark corner of the earth that does not deserve, if only a passing glance of wonder and pity.”¹⁷

As Conrad said, his task was, by the power of the written word to make us ear, to make us feel, but before all, to make us see.

¹⁶ ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.26.

¹⁷ CONRAD, J., 1926. *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Co, pp.279-81.

1.1.2. Conrad's and Marlow's journey into the Congo

Marlow's journey was evidently prompted by Conrad's own journey into the Congo in 1890.

From the analyses of various sources, the work attempts to create a list of all the resemblances detected between Marlow and Conrad as far as their journey is concerned.

Conrad's career, like Marlow's, spans an important period in the history of relations between Africa and Europe: "when Conrad was a boy in the 1860s and 1870s, much of Africa remained unknown to Europeans; when he actually went to Africa as a man, he participated in what had become the 'scramble' for Africa."¹⁸

Conrad, like Marlow, had grown up with an image of Africa based on the hazy allure of the unknown. "Conrad's study of geography had roused in him an interest in places far from home. Mungo Park's Africa, the Pacific regions of Captain Cook appeared to him magical."¹⁹ In his essay *Geography and Some Explorers* Conrad referring to Africa says : "the Continent out of which the Romans used

¹⁸ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp.19.

¹⁹ GURKO, L., 1962. *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp.12.

to say new things was always coming...Regions unknown!"²⁰ He talks of having dreamt of going to the Congo, struck as he was with the story of David Livingstone. In *A Personal Record* he would say that it was in 1868, when "nine years old or thereabouts, that while looking at a map of Africa of the time and putting my finger on the blank space then representing the unsolved mystery of that continent, I said to myself...: when I grow up I shall go there."²¹ As he says, he thought no more about it till after about twenty-five years, he was offered an opportunity to go there, as if the sin of childish audacity was to be visited in his mature head.

He eventually did: "Yes. I did go there: there being the region of Stanley Falls which in '68 was the blankest of blank spaces on the earth's figured surface."²²

In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad gives Marlow a similar boyhood experience. In fact, also Marlow tells us how one day the sight of a map of Africa had re-awakened his boyhood fascination by unexplored regions, and he had decided to apply for command of a

²⁰ CONRAD, J., 1926. *Last Essays*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, pp.4.

²¹ CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent., pp.13.

²² Ibidem, pp.13.

steamboat plying the Congo. “Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration.”²³ As he says, there was one place, ‘the biggest, the most blank’ he had a hankering after.

But a change has taken place on the map: “the blankest of blank spaces has acquired ‘rivers and lakes and names’”²⁴, but also, more surprisingly, it has become ‘a place of darkness’.

“In November 1889 Conrad went to Brussels to be interviewed by Albert Thys of the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo (the Belgian Limited Company for Trade in the Upper Congo) with a view to captaining one of the company’s river-steamers.”²⁵ In his letter to Aleksander Poradowski he wrote: “I’m now more or less under contract to the Société Belge pour le Commerce du Haut Congo to be master of one of its river steamers. I

²³ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1971. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad; An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism* Edited by Robert Kimbrough. New York; London: Norton&Company, pp.8.

²⁴ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.19.

²⁵ Ibidem, pp.129-130.

have not signed any agreement, but Mr. A. Thys, the director of that Company, has promised me the post...it will probably be in May.”²⁶

He gained the interview through the influence exerted by an aunt - even though the person he addressed as ‘Aunt’, Marguerite Poradowska, was the wife of a distant cousin.

Conrad wrote to Marguerite from the ends of the earth, and on his letter of the 10th of June we read: “You have endowed my life with new interest, new affection; I’m very grateful to you for this. Grateful for all the sweetness, for all the bitterness of this priceless gift.”²⁷

Similarly, Marlow, through the agency of an aunt living in Europe, had a successful interview with a director of a huge trading company in the sepulchral city, identifiably Brussels. And, after an examination by the company’s doctor and a further meeting with his aunt, set off on the journey to Africa.

Marlow, having obtained his command, “flew round like mad to get ready”²⁸ Also Conrad did, indeed, ‘fly round like mad to get ready’. He certainly went back and forward between the Continent

²⁶ KARL, F.R. and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.33.

²⁷ Ibidem, pp.55

²⁸ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.55.

and England making the arrangements for his journey, and his own record of this time suggests his excitement. To Zagorski he wrote: “If you knew...in what a universal cataclysm, in what a fantastic atmosphere of mixed shopping, business, and affecting scenes, I passed two whole weeks.”²⁹

Another, more intimate, personal factor also provided material for the tale: “Conrad was a lively raconteur who used to swap yarns with G.F.W. Hope, W.B. Keen, and C.H. Mears on Hope’s yawl, the *Nellie*, anchored in the Thames.”³⁰ Hence, the setting and manner of the tale’s opening. Moreover, “the group of men described in *Heart of Darkness* had appeared already in *Youth* as the audience for one of Marlow’s tales.”³¹

Conrad spent some six months in the Congo altogether, carrying with him (like Marlow) the partly written manuscript of his first novel, *Almayer’s Folly*. And in *Heart of Darkness* we read “The MS. of

²⁹ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.12.

³⁰ STAPE, J.H., 1996. *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge (etc.): Cambridge University Press, pp.49.

³¹ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.126.

Almayer's Folly, carried about me as if it were a talisman or a treasure, went there too.”³²

On 10 May 1890 Conrad left Bordeaux in the *Ville de Maceio* for the Congo. On 12 June 1890 he disembarked at Boma, the seat of government for the Congo. Marlow also disembarks at the seat of government.

“The thirty miles of river from Boma on the coast up to Matadi was navigable, but the 230-mile journey further up to Stanley Pool and Kinshasa had to be made across land.”³³ So, Conrad, like other white men heading for the interior, he first had to make the long trek from Matadi around the rapids, along with a caravan of black porters. The report of the missionary G.W. Broucke sets out the general difficulties Conrad, and anyone else making this journey, had to face. “There is only one means of transport. All must go on men’s heads for about 230 miles...[from Matadi]a road leaves the river, or rather a narrow footpath, and runs across the hills, along rocky ridges, down

³²CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent., pp.13.

³³ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp.144.

into deep gorges, through rushing streams...”³⁴ As Norman Sherry says, “For Conrad it must have been the most grueling part of his Congo journey, lasting as it did from 28 June to 2 August 1890”³⁵, but he has crammed into one paragraph of *Heart of Darkness* all the unpleasant and macabre aspects of his own journey.

In the novel Marlow, as Conrad had done, begins his trip with the long walk around the rapids: “Six black men advanced...I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope, each had an iron collar on his neck and all were connected together with a chain ...These were the laborers starting work on Leopold’s railway.”³⁶

A few pages later, Marlow describes a spot where some starving railway workers had crawled away to die. “It seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno...They were dying slowly. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation...”³⁷

Farther along the trail, he sees “now and then a carrier dead in harness, at rest in the long grass near the path”, and notes the

³⁴ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad's Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.36.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp.37.

³⁶ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.64.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp.66.

mysterious “body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead”³⁸.

As Norman Sherry says, “It is not surprising that this powerful passage has been taken to reflect Conrad’s actual experience of Matadi.”³⁹ In his diary entry for July 3, 1890, Conrad noted: “Met an off[ic]er of the State inspecting; a few minutes afterwards saw at a camp[in]g place the dead body of a Backongo. Shot? Horrid smell.” The following day: ‘Saw another dead body lying by the path in an attitude of meditative repose.’ And on July 29: “On the road today passed a skeleton tied up to a post.”⁴⁰

During the hike around the rapids, Marlow also describes how people had fled to avoid being conscripted as porters: “...I passed through several abandoned villages”⁴¹ This, too, was what Conrad himself saw. The porters of the caravan the novelist was with came close to mutiny during the trip.

³⁸ Ibidem, pp.71.

³⁹ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.30.

⁴⁰ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.158.

⁴¹ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.71.

In the *Congo Diary*, Conrad records “At night when the moon rose heard shouts and drumming in distant villages. Passed a bad night.”⁴² In *Heart of Darkness* we read: ‘Perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild.’

We might also compare it with Bentley’s account of his first journey to Kinshasa in 1881: “We had heard drums before, but until now had not thought much of them. From this time they became an intolerable nuisance. As we passed along, one town would beat a warning to the next.”⁴³

The diary entry of Conrad for 29 July, concerns bad news from up the river ‘All the steamers disabled. One wrecked.’ In fact, before Conrad reached Kinshasa, he heard that the *Florida*, which he had expected to command was wrecked. We might compare it with *Heart of Darkness*: ‘one of them ...informed me with great volubility and many digressions...that my steamer was at the bottom of the river.’

However, as Norman Sherry points out, “The *Florida* was wrecked on 18 July, but was refloated and brought back to Kinshasa in five

⁴² CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.153.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp.136.

days.”⁴⁴ “Conrad was not, like Marlow, delayed there for three months and involved in the salvage work.”⁴⁵

Like Marlow, at Stanley Falls Conrad fell ill. As he wrote to Karol Zagorski on May 22, 1890: “What makes me rather uneasy is the information that 60 per cent of our Company’s employees return to Europe before they have completed even six months service. Fever and dysentery! There are others who are sent home in a hurry at the end of a year, so that they shouldn’t die in the Congo.”⁴⁶

It was not by chance that King Leopold II never went to the Congo. Something of a hypochondriac, he worried about germs. And he had quite good reason to do so, for Europeans had not yet found ways of combating all the major tropical diseases. “Leopold knew-and kept secret-statistics which showed that before 1900, about one third of all white men who went to the Congo ended up succumbing to diseases and dying there.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.41.

⁴⁵ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.134.

⁴⁶ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1971. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad; An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism* Edited by Robert Kimbrough. New York; London: Norton&Company, pp.107

⁴⁷ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xvi.

The doctor who clinically examines Marlow before he leaves, hints not only that few return from the journey, and not only at the perils of madness there, but also that “anyone who applies for such a post may ipso facto be touched by lunacy.”⁴⁸

In his letter to his ‘Dearest and best of Aunts’ dated 26 September, Conrad asks her to keep a secret for him: “my health is far from good... in going up the river I suffered from fever four times in two months, and then at the Falls (which is its home territory), I suffered an attack of dysentery lasting five days. I feel somewhat weak physically and not a little demoralized.”⁴⁹

Conrad (like Marlow) who “was used to commanding ocean-going vessels, had gone to an unfamiliar area to command on a river a frail, humble, tin-pot steamboat.”⁵⁰ On his letter to Marguerite Poradowska he would write that he felt homesick for the sea; he had the desire to look again on the level expanse of salt water which has so often lulled him. “You could perhaps help me. It appears that this company, or another affiliated with it, will have some ocean-going vessels...If

⁴⁸ WATTS, C.1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.49.

⁴⁹ KARL, F.R. and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.62.

⁵⁰WATTS, C.1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.44.

someone could submit my name for the command of one of their ships...”⁵¹

Conrad stayed true to life when creating the charismatic, murderous figure at the center of his novel: Mr. Kurtz. He was clearly inspired by several real people, and among them we find: Henry Morton Stanley; Charles Stokes, who abandoned the Church Missionary Society and, similarly to Kurtz, “took a native wife, and led a wild career as a slave trader and gunrunner”⁵²; Georges Antoine Klein, a French agent for an ivory-gathering firm at Stanley Falls. He died on shipboard, as Kurtz does in the novel, while Conrad was piloting the *Roi des Belges* down the river. According to Hampson, “In the manuscript Conrad began by writing ‘Monsieur Klein’; this was changed to ‘Mr Klein’, and then ‘Klein’ was cancelled after the fourth time and replaced by Kurtz. ‘Klein’ is German for ‘small’, as ‘Kurz’ is German for ‘short’.”⁵³

Another Kurtz prototype was Arthur Hodister. He was a Belgian commercial agent and explorer, “a man of wide abilities, and a man of

⁵¹ KARL, F.R. and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.63.

⁵² BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.193.

⁵³ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.133.

principles who was definitely on the side of virtue. He had, moreover, influential friends in Europe, and he did go far in terms of his career.”⁵⁴ Like Kurtz, Hodister discovered a lake. Albert Chapaux writes: « Hodister découvrit une large expansion de la rivière, de deux kilomètres de long sur six del large... ».⁵⁵

Moreover, like Kurtz, Hodister’s success was the result of a terrible ascendancy he has gained over the natives. Finally, Hodister, like Kurtz, was a man of high principle. He “saw himself as having a mission above that of mere commercial enterprise, with a suggestion of the important influence of the benevolent white man over the natives, ‘an august Benevolence’ ruling ‘an exotic Immensity’.”⁵⁶

However, as Adam Hochschild says, Conrad’s legion of biographers and critics has almost entirely ignored the man who resembles Kurtz most closely of all, the swashbuckling Captain Léon Rom of the Force Publique. “It is from Rom that Conrad may have taken the signal feature of his villain: the collection of African heads surrounding

⁵⁴ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.95.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, pp.98.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp.100.

Kurtz's house."⁵⁷ Similarly, "when Delcommune's expedition reached Katanga in April 1891, they were entertained by Msiri in a compound surrounded by trees from which hung a collection of human skulls."⁵⁸ Again, in a description of the aftermath of a punitive military expedition against some African rebels, we read that many women and children were taken, and twenty-one heads were brought to the falls, and have been used by Captain Rom as a decoration round a flower-bed in front of his house. And according to Hochschild, if Conrad missed this account, he almost certainly noticed when 'The Saturday Review', a magazine he admired and read faithfully, repeated the story in its issue of December 17, 1898. That date was within a few days of when Conrad began writing *Heart of Darkness*. "Furthermore, in the Congo, Rom and Conrad may have met... When Conrad's caravan passed through Leopoldville, the station chief there was Léon Rom."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.176.

⁵⁸ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.138.

⁵⁹ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.177.

It would be as well to consider the relationship between the character of Fresleven in *Heart of Darkness* and his real-life counterpart, Johannes Freiesleben.

In the novella, Marlow learns that his predecessor was killed over a quarrel with a village chief. When Marlow goes to recover Fresleven's remains, he discovers that these have simply been left where he fell: "Afterwards nobody seemed to trouble much about Fresleven's remains."⁶⁰

Johannes Freiesleben, a Danish captain, Conrad's predecessor in the command of the *Florida*, "was indeed killed over a quarrel with natives in the Congo, aged twenty-nine, on 29 January 1890."⁶¹ The diary entry of the Congo missionary George Grenfell for 4 March 1890, mentions its mutilation: "Lingerji says the murdered man is still unburied –his hands and feet have been cut off- his clothes taken away and his body covered with a native cloth."⁶²

⁶⁰ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.54.

⁶¹ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.185.

⁶² SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad's Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.18.

It seems quite certain that “in spite of the influence Conrad had through his aunt with the director of the SAB, his obtaining of a post with the company depended directly upon this tragic incidence.”⁶³

What seems likely is that Conrad established an acquaintance with the trader Prosper Harou, “a Belgian agent of the Société Anonyme Belge”⁶⁴, who “was to be his troublesome companion for some time and was to earn a mention in *Heart of Darkness*.”⁶⁵

We also know that “Prosper Harou’s older brother had accompanied Stanley on his 1879-82 Congo expedition.”⁶⁶

Harou catches fever and has to be carried in a hammock on a pole. “As he weighted sixteen stone I had no end of rows with the carriers”, and eventually, Marlow says, “I made a speech in English with gestures, not one of which was lost to the sixty pairs of eyes before me.”⁶⁷ The next morning, Marlow finds “the whole concern wrecked in a bush –man, hammock, groans, blankets, horrors. The heavy pole

⁶³ Ibidem, pp.15.

⁶⁴ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.163.

⁶⁵ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.25.

⁶⁶ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.134.

⁶⁷ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories*/ by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.71.

had skinned his poor nose. He was very anxious for me to kill somebody, but there wasn't the shadow of a carrier near.”⁶⁸

In Conrad's diary for the equivalent stage of his own journey through the Congo, we find these entries: “Wednesday, 30th [July]... Harou became very ill with bilious [sic] attack and fever... Row with carriers all the way. Harou suffering much through the jerks of the hammock... Expect lots of bother with carriers to-morrow. Had them all called and made a speech, which they did not understand. They promise good behavior.”⁶⁹

Conrad's sense of isolation which “would seem to have been partly due to his unfamiliar role as passenger”⁷⁰, has been transferred to Marlow who feels isolated “amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact.”⁷¹ As Cedric Watts says, the Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* has an enigmatic apartness: “he's in the group, but not exactly of it; and he seems more intelligent, more intense, more circumspect; a man who has suffered more;

⁶⁸ Ibidem, pp.72.

⁶⁹ WATTS, C.1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.80.

⁷⁰ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad's Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.25.

⁷¹ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp.61.

homo duplex, the man of contrasting extremes, of paradoxical temperament.”⁷²

Marlow had returned to London after six years sailing in the east, and “Conrad in 1889 had just returned to London after intermittently sailing in the east since 1883, ending with fourteen months as master of the *Otago*.”⁷³

In conversations before he took up his new job, “the thirty-two-year-old Korzeniowski showed that, like almost everyone in Europe, he believed Leopold’s mission in Africa was a noble and ‘civilizing’ one.”⁷⁴

Eighteen years after his boyish dreams his sentiments are rather different.

In one letter addressed to Marguerite Poradowska, he would write “Decidement je regrette d’etre venu ici.”⁷⁵

As we know from his diary of the time, Conrad was a sensitive observer of the mendacities, intrigues and brutalities around him; And

⁷² WATTS, C.1997. *Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.32.

⁷³ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.11.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.172.

⁷⁵ KARL, F.R. and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.lii.

as he wrote in his *Last Essays*, a great melancholy descended upon him; Even though Africa was the very spot of his childhood dreams, there was no shadowy friend to stand by his side in the night of the enormous wilderness, no great haunting memory, but only “the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration. What an end to the idealized realities of a boy’s daydreams!”⁷⁶

On his return from the Congo, Conrad feels cut off from ordinary people and their ordinary activities and attitudes. As he said, he found himself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other. “I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance.”⁷⁷

Marlow at the end sits “apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. For him, it seems, the experience is not yet

⁷⁶ CONRAD, J., 1926. *Last Essays*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, pp.17.

⁷⁷ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.37.

complete, the meaning of the journey is not yet resolvable, the whole affair is still food for meditation.”⁷⁸

After brooding about his Congo experience for eight years, Conrad transformed it into *Heart of Darkness*, probably one of the most widely reprinted short novel in English.

⁷⁸ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.33.

1.2. *Heart of Darkness* moved away from autobiography

The second point profoundly contrasts with the former: Conrad, through various and subtle means, moves *Heart of Darkness* away from autobiography. In this way Marlow is both, at the same time that he is neither.

And perhaps the most important way in which Conrad distances himself from his material is through his use of Marlow. *Heart of Darkness* is in fact a framed tale, in which a first narrator introduces Marlow and has the last word after Marlow has fallen silent. A critic, Patrick Brantlinger says that even supposing Marlow to speak directly for Conrad, we don't know if Conrad/Marlow agrees with the values expressed by the primary narrator. Moreover, "Marlow's story is not primarily about himself. The thrust of the narrative is towards Kurtz and Kurtz's experience."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.xxvi.

Robert Kimbrough, for instance, questions: “When Kurtz utters ‘The horror! The horror!’ what do you think that Conrad thought that the narrator thought that Marlow thought that Kurtz thought?”⁸⁰

Or, as Miller notes, “the only African place-names left in *Heart of Darkness* after Marlow’s description of the ‘blank space’ are transformed from fact to simile, from places with names to places with names ‘like’ these.”⁸¹ And according to Hampson, the effect is to weaken the connection with Conrad’s own experience.

Furthermore, the same Conrad, not only would never confirm that Marlow represents his alter ego, but, on the contrary, he would introduce him as a mere acquaintance which happened to ripen into friendship. In Conrad’s Preface to the *Youth* volume of 1902 he says that Marlow was supposed to be all sorts of things, but, simply, “of all my people he’s the one that has never been a vexation to my spirit.”⁸²

He describes him as a most discreet, understanding man, but he also

⁸⁰CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.xi.

⁸¹CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.xxiv.

⁸²CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent, pp. IX.

adds that at the end of a tale he is never sure that it may not be for the last time.

1.3. Ambiguity as *Heart of Darkness*'s key word

Finally, we might say that we cannot form a clear vision of the relation between them, and that in the world of *Heart of Darkness*, “there are no clear answers. Ambiguity, perhaps the main form of darkness in the story, prevails.”⁸³

We may recall E.M. Forster who says that Conrad “is misty in the middle as well as at the edges...the secret cask of his genius contains a vapor rather than a jewel.”⁸⁴ Or we might mention Ian Watt, who suggests that “*Heart of Darkness* embodies more thoroughly than any previous fiction the posture of uncertainty and doubt.”⁸⁵

For instance, Marlow has a geographical evasiveness. It is easy enough for the reader to infer that “the snake-like river is the Congo, that the region of the company’s activities is therefore the Belgian

⁸³ BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.256-7.

⁸⁴ GURKO, L., 1962. *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp. 2.

⁸⁵ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.xxvi.

Congo and that the sepulchral city is therefore Brussels. Yet Marlow leaves this to be interfered, instead of naming the various places.”⁸⁶

And what’s the purpose? There may be different reasons, but the one which stands preeminently is that, according to Conrad, explicitness destroys all illusion. We recall Conrad’s famous reproach to Richard Curle: “Explicitness, my dear fellow, is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion.”⁸⁷

But, it may also derive from his own personality. In fact, “The character will never be really clear because of the writer’s dread of intimacy.”⁸⁸ Conrad has a rigid conception as to where the rights of the public stop, “he has determined we shall not be ‘all over’ him. We may not see such a character clearly because he does not wish us to see. He never gives himself away. Our impertinence is rebuked.”⁸⁹

As André Gide says in ‘La Nouvelle Revue Française’, Conrad did not want to talk about his past « une sorte de pudeur, de désaffection de

⁸⁶ WATTS, C.1997. *Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.49-50.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, pp.49-50

⁸⁸ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.315

⁸⁹ Ibidem, pp.315.

lui-même, retenait, empêchait sa confidence...aussi bien dans ses livres que dans sa conversation, il était singulièrement maladroit au récit direct ; ce n'est que dans la fiction qu'il se sentait à l'aise.»⁹⁰

Virginia Woolf says in 'The Common Reader' that "there was always an air of mystery about him. It was...partly his memorable appearance, partly his preference for living in the depths of the country, out of ear-shot of gossips, beyond reach of hostesses..."⁹¹

Or, his 'ambiguity' may derive from his own personal history which "was a disgraceful paradigm of shameful things, from the desertion of the ideals of his Polish heritage to the seemingly capricious abandonment of his sea life."⁹²

⁹⁰JEAN AUBRY, G., 1924. *Hommage à Joseph Conrad : 1857-1924*. Paris : Saint-Amand, pp.18.

⁹¹ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.323.

⁹² BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.37.

CHAPTER II

THE TITLE'S AMBIGUITY

Heart of Darkness is the story of the journey of Marlow into darkest Africa.

What does the title mean? Difficult to say. As Cedric Watts suggests, from the start “we sense ambiguity even before consciously analyzing the components of the phrase”⁹³, or as Bloom highlights, compared with Conrad’s more traditional titles such as *Almayer’s Folly* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Heart of Darkness* strikes a very special note. The work will show that there is not a unique answer to the question above, but various. Once again we might state that Brantlinger is correct when he states that ‘ambiguity, perhaps the main form of darkness in the story, prevails’.

When the tale was first published, as a serial in Blackwood’s Magazine in 1899, its title was *The Heart of Darkness*. In his letter dated 31st December Conrad would write to Blackwood: “the title I’m

⁹³ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad’s Heart of darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.9.

thinking of is 'The Heart of Darkness'...the subject is of our time distinctly- though not topically treated.”⁹⁴ When Conrad deleted 'The', “he made the grammatical format of the phrase resemble that of such phrase as 'man of straw' or 'hearts of oak', he gave equipoise of ambiguity to the title”.⁹⁵

The word 'Heart' might suggest that darkness has a center which represents meaning: the reader penetrates the unknown to the known. Marlow himself says that at the center of things there is meaning and that he is pursuing this meaning. But what we finally perceive is the inconclusiveness of his findings. In fact, “Again and again he seems about to declare the truth about Kurtz and the darkness, but his utterance most often takes the form of either a thunderous contradiction in terms or a hushed and introspective ambiguity.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1986. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 2:1898-1902*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.139-140.

⁹⁵ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.7.

⁹⁶ CONRAD,J. and C.B. COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook*. Basingstoke; London: MacMillan, pp.65.

In this way, we are left with another assertion of the title: “it is the heart that above all is composed of darkness and our progress must be through the apparently or partially known to the unknown.”⁹⁷

Conrad may be referring to “the heart of the great continent into which Marlow journeys, a land largely unexplored and still commonly thought of as the ‘Dark Continent’.”⁹⁸ That is to say, a journey which starts from the supposed certainties of a well established civilization, and arrives at an unknown and ‘dark’ world.

But this darkness -as the same Marlow will realize in the course of his journey- might also be related to the guilt of the white man which indeed made Africa grow dark.

In fact, according to V.G. Kiernan, Africa, in this period, became very truly a Dark Continent, but its darkness was one the invaders brought with them: the sombre shadow of the white man.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, pp.65.

⁹⁸ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.71.

In fact, as Hampson says, “instead of bringing light into darkness as it claims, the ‘civilizing’ mission actually uncovers the ‘darkness’ at its own heart.”⁹⁹

Marlow goes out into the wilderness in search of vitality and he soon finds out that civilization “has contaminated the very heart of the savage continent. Far from the source of vitality and harmony with nature that the narrative has led us to expect, we discover with Marlow a ‘grove of death’.”¹⁰⁰ According to M. Moutet, the Europeans are destroyers. « En voulant se débarrasser de l’incompréhensible et de la peur, on ne crée que de l’absurde. Les stations coloniales sont des lieux factices, le décor éphémère d’une mise en scène violente. »¹⁰¹

Contemporaneously, Conrad might be referring to Kurtz’s own darkness. In fact, as previously said, “The thrust of the narrative is towards Kurtz and Kurtz’s experience.”¹⁰² “The shadowy, mysterious nature of Kurtz [...] is a darkness which also deepens as Marlow

⁹⁹ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp.xi.

¹⁰⁰ ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.103.

¹⁰¹ PACCAUD-HUGUET, J., 2002. *Heart of Darkness, Une Leçon de Ténèbres*. Paris : Lettres Modernes Minard, pp.18.

¹⁰² CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp.xxvi.

approaches his destination.”¹⁰³ In fact, “when Marlow finds him shortly before his death, he is a grotesque, emaciated shadow whose horrible physical deterioration truly reflects his inner emptiness.”¹⁰⁴

Thus, “the narrator has arrived at the heart of the darkness which surrounds a lost soul just as he has arrived at the heart of the darkness of the Dark Continent; but “he is alien to both regions; and in the end, the river bears him away from those things which he has perceived but has not fully comprehended.”¹⁰⁵

Marlow has not comprehended the darkness, because in the novel « Ce qui est à l'intérieur n'est pas représentable, ni de façon conceptuelle, ni par le jeu de l'imagination...La vérité reste tapie alentour, dans la forêt vierge : elle est inaccessible. »¹⁰⁶ According to J.H. Miller, what can be seen is only what can be seen; the darkness is in principle invisible and remains invisible.

¹⁰³ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.71-72.

¹⁰⁴ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.357.

¹⁰⁵ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.72.

¹⁰⁶ PACCAUD-HUGUET, J., 2002. *Heart of Darkness, Une Leçon de Ténèbres*. Paris : Lettres Modernes Minard, pp.17-19.

Ambiguous is also the combination of ‘Heart’ and ‘Darkness’; according to Bloom, it defies logic. For instance he asks how can something inorganic like darkness have an organic center of life and feeling. As he says, “*Heart of Darkness* was a fateful event in the history of fiction; and to announce it Conrad had hit upon as haunting an oxymoron as Baudelaire had for poetry with ‘Les Fleurs du Mal’.”¹⁰⁷

The word ‘Darkness’ is often in contrast with the words ‘light’ and ‘white’. For instance, according to Dowden, there is the contrast of the light on the river up which the steamer moves with the darkness of the bordering jungle, as Marlow and his companions travel toward the heart of the Dark Continent. And “there is the contrast of the light in which men like Marlow move with the darkness which surrounds Kurtz and, potentially, every man, since in the thematic development of the story, Kurtz represents the ultimate possibility of degradation in mankind.”¹⁰⁸

Another example may be provided: the biggest, most blank space on the map which had so fascinated Marlow when he was a little chap ,

¹⁰⁷ BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.99.

¹⁰⁸ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.72-73.

had “ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery- a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness.”¹⁰⁹

Conrad repeatedly upsets the reassuringly simplistic balance of primary connotations -which associates White to holiness, purity and Black to evil and damnation- intermittently exploiting secondary connotations. “Thus darkness does not always symbolize evil and light good.”¹¹⁰

For instance, “white instead of standing for purity, comes to stand for the violence and hypocrisy of white civilization.”¹¹¹ In the tale, white is the color “of Fresleven’s bleached bones, of the skulls round Kurtz’s hut, of Kurtz’s bald head, of the ivory which elicits the pilgrim’s avarice and the city which contains the company’s headquarters reminds Marlow of a ‘whited sepulchre’.”¹¹² In the tale, Marlow says ‘In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre.’ According to the critic Hampson, it

¹⁰⁹ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories*/ by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent., pp.52.

¹¹⁰ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.9.

¹¹¹ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xx.

¹¹² WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.10.

reminds us of Matthew 23:27-8: “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 of all uncleanness.”¹¹³

Another example may be provided by the clerk of the Company. “His inhumanity is symbolized by the white and brilliant perfection of his dress, which contrasts sharply with the surrounding devastation and the misery of the black men who creep about in the gloom of the trees.”¹¹⁴

White is also “the color of ivory, the pilgrims’ absurd god.”¹¹⁵

The same sun turns out to be false as it burns without comforting. It is another “symbol of the obscurity and ambiguity in which Marlow finds himself...The sun, brilliant as it is, fails to penetrate a white fog which settles over the river.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.130.

¹¹⁴ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.77.

¹¹⁵ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xx.

¹¹⁶ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.78.

The association of black to evil is reversed too. “So black is also positive as the color of the jungle and the paddlers and natives, and the cannibals with their restraint, and the black mistress’s invocation.”¹¹⁷

We might question: why does Conrad upset the common world view which associates black to evil and white to purity?

Conrad wants to highlight that the supposed bringers of ‘light’ are instead agents of ‘darkness’. As Falinski points out, in *Heart of Darkness*, the black man is primitive, but noble in his pristine, detribalized state. While the white man’s behavior in Africa is generally seen as violence, exploitation of the natives, inefficiency, futility, lunacy and evil.

Moreover, “As Eric Woods has argued, light/darkness imagery in imperialist discourse contained an ambivalence that proved ideologically useful.”¹¹⁸

For instance, Norman Sherry reports a speech made by Stanley, which compared the Roman colonization of Britain with the British in Africa. “God forbid that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge and preclude the light of knowledge which has

¹¹⁷ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xx.

¹¹⁸ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.xxxiii.

reached every other quarter of the globe from having access into her coasts.”¹¹⁹

According to Hampson, this speech, in fact, implies a moral imperative: to bring light into areas of darkness. In this way, usefully, missions and settlements are justified. And it “served to consolidate fixed categories, a perception of ‘us’ and ‘them’.”¹²⁰

Conrad “breaks down this sense of fixed opposition and undermines the implied ‘moral imperative’.”¹²¹

Equally noteworthy is Conrad’s use of religious terminology and biblical allusions in *Heart of Darkness*.

A possible explanation of this use is that “colonial expansion is identified with the spread of Christianity.”¹²² Thus what Conrad is doing is representing the ‘unholy alliance’ of Christianity and colonialism.

¹¹⁹ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad’s Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.121.

¹²⁰ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹²¹ Ibidem, pp.xxxiv.

¹²² DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.34.

The critic Joan E. Steiner makes us notice the allusions to the ‘whited sepulchre’, the ‘apostles’, the ‘pilgrims’ who carry their staves, and the indictment of blindness, hypocrisy, and greed.

Cedric Watts links the much exploited light/darkness imagery to the Genesis. In chapter I, verses 1-5, we read: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the Darkness he called Night...”¹²³ He also notices that the manager description ‘a forked little beard and a hooked nose’ is the traditional representation of the devil.

Moreover, as he says, Kurtz might remind us of Lucifer, the ‘Light-bringer’, the brightest of the Angels who preferred reigning in Hell than serve in Heaven.

Cedric Watts also looks back to Aeneas: if Marlow learnt about the corruptions of an established civilization, Aeneas gained important knowledge after a perilous and often horrifying journey into a region remote, strange and dark. According to the critic Hampson, another reference to the Aeneid might be found when Marlow introduces the

¹²³ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.11.

two women at the Company's offices. 'Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness'. It reminds Virgil's Sibyl, "who guards 'the door of gloomy Dis', the door of the Underworld into which Aeneas is to descend."¹²⁴

According to Falinski, this use of religious terminology is also reminiscent of the medieval search for the Holy Grail. "The pure, unstained knight, set out on long journeys in search of the Grail. The nearer the knight got to chapel, the more fraught with difficulties and dangers his path. Those knights who were worthy received light and illumination."¹²⁵ Marlow's quest is similar. He comes up against many obstacles -the river, the snags, the tortuous forest paths- and in the end, he receives enlightenment: 'It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me – and into my thoughts... not extraordinary in any way – not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.'

Last but not least, it is interesting to treat with what has been called 'the last Darkness'.

¹²⁴ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.131.

¹²⁵ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xxii.

Erdinast-Vulcan has noticed that “Marlow’s description of his state of mind before setting out on his journey points to a vague but pressing state of ennui, a spiritual coma”¹²⁶: the city is a ‘whited sepulchre, shrouded in a dead silence’ with “grass sprouting between the stones.”¹²⁷ According to her, this state of ennui and the need to get at the truth of things are fundamentally related to the intellectual unease of the fin de siècle.

Conrad in fact, “senses more acutely than most of his contemporaries the late-nineteenth-century nightmare of a Domsday in which the ultimate darkness would settle on this planet.”¹²⁸

In a letter dated 14 January 1898, he wrote: “if you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence.”¹²⁹

In the 1850s, William Thomson had in fact defined “the thermodynamic principle of the dissipation of ‘available’ energy; and the popularization of this principle has disseminated the idea that the

¹²⁶ ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford university press, pp.92.

¹²⁷ CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent., pp.55.

¹²⁸ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.12.

¹²⁹ CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent, pp.44.

sun, like a Victorian coal-fire in the sky, was steadily burning itself out.¹³⁰

As Watts states, in the final scene of *Heart of Darkness*, with Marlow and his little group of hearers dwarfed beneath the growing gloom, Conrad makes us feel subliminally an array of his fears: “the fear that a minority of decent human is at present fighting a lonely rearguard-action against barbarism...and the fear that blank extinction awaits mankind as a race as surely as it awaits man as a mortal individual.”¹³¹

¹³⁰ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.14.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, pp.18.

CHAPTER III

KING LEOPOLD-KURTZ: BETWEEN IDEALISM AND EXPLOITATION

The chapter's aim is twofold. First, it would attempt to reinforce Edmund Morel's idea that what was going on in the Congo was the old story of evil and greed and lust perpetrated upon a weaker people, and 'never before, assuredly, has the hypocrisy with which such deeds have been cloaked, attained to heights so sublime.' Second, it would show the character of Kurtz as a symbol of Imperialism and more specifically as a personification of its 'ambiguity'/hypocrisy.

3.1. The Congo Free State and King Leopold's 'philanthropic' purpose

As Marlow says in *Heart of Darkness*, Central Africa, in 1868, was “the blankest of blank spaces on the earth’s figured surface.”¹³² About four fifths of sub-Saharan Africa was governed by local chiefs, kings or other indigenous rulers. A mere 40 years later, in 1910, nearly all of this vast expanse of territory had become colonies or protectorates controlled by European countries.”¹³³

Africa had ceased to be veiled in darkness. In other words, “Africa did face a very serious challenge, the challenge of colonialism.”¹³⁴

Someone who did lust after the territory of the Congo was King Leopold II of Belgium.

Leopold, who had taken his country’s throne in 1865, was an “imposing, bearded, august man of great charm, ruthlessness and greed.”¹³⁵

¹³² CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent., pp.13.

¹³³ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.ix.

¹³⁴ BOAHEN,A.A., 1990. *Africa Under Colonial Domination: 1880-1935*. London: Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press; Paris: Unesco, pp.1.

Leopold had had an interest in colonialism since the 1850s. And, according to Neal Ascherson, colonialism, for Leopold meant “the very limited science of using technologically less-developed populations to produce wealth from the natural resources of their own country.”¹³⁶

Adam Hochschild says that he was frustrated at heading such a small country, and at doing so at a time in history when western European monarchs were rapidly losing power to elected parliaments. Moreover, the Belgian government did not want colonies as they seemed an extravagance for a small nation with no navy and no merchant fleet. However, to Leopold, their lack of desire for colonies posed no problem: “if they weren’t interested, he would acquire one of his own”¹³⁷.

Leopold’s interest was drawn from East Africa to the Congo basin. In fact, the return of Henry Morton Stanley from his great journey of exploration down the Congo, forcibly directed the attention of King

¹³⁵ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.x.

¹³⁶ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp. xix

¹³⁷ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.x.

Leopold to the possibilities for exploration and civilization offered by the Congo region.

Stanley worked under a joint commission from the 'New York Herald' and the 'London Daily Telegraph', and he was not only an adept self-publicist, for instance with 'How I found Livingstone', 'The Congo and the Founding of its Free State' and 'In Darkest Africa', he was also the subject of public controversy. In fact, although he presented himself as a philanthropist, Stanley was "a brutal taskmaster, quick to flog his porters or to lay waste any African villages that threatened to impede his progress, and, at all times, to shoot first and ask questions later."¹³⁸

For instance, Felix Driver recounts the 1876 controversy which was sparked off by Stanley's newspaper account of a violent incident at Bambireh Island on Lake Victoria.

"In 1875 Stanley had fallen foul of the inhabitants of the island: they had refused him food, threatened him with spears and arrows, pulled his hair and stolen the oars from his boat."¹³⁹ Stanley had returned there with a force of 280 men and, having enticed the inhabitants on to

¹³⁸Ibidem, pp.ix.

¹³⁹ CONRAD, J., 1995. Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary; Edited with an introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books, pp. xviii.

the shore, fired round after round of bullets into them. The most striking thing was the ruthless nature of the force and the apparent enjoyment of that ruthlessness in his account of the fact.

As Brantlinger points out, the purpose behind Stanley's work in the Congo was not far removed from the aims of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition in *Heart of Darkness*: "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into safe'."¹⁴⁰

In his report on 'African Exploration' in *The Times*, Stanley described a country of 'unspeakable riches' just waiting for 'an enterprising capitalist' to 'take the matter in hand'.

"Six months after reading the article on 'African Exploration', in September 1876, Leopold organized at Brussels the first geographical conference on Central Africa, the *Conférence Géographique Africaine*."¹⁴¹

As Hennessy notices, here we find the exalted language that was in reverse proportion to the nobility of the real intent. At the Conference

¹⁴⁰ BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.18

¹⁴¹ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp. xix.

in fact, “he announced his moral crusade: he did propose to ‘open to civilization the only part of our globe where it has not yet penetrated’.”¹⁴²

The Conference resulted in the creation of The International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Africa. Its first act was to form an International Commission “with an executive committee of four, of which Leopold was elected head, and national Committees in the principal countries of Europe. The Belgian Committee “displayed from the first greater activity than did any of the other committees.”¹⁴³

King Leopold II courted and flattered Stanley. As an Englishman, Stanley “had hoped that the Congo’s colonial master would be Britain, but, the British were coping with various rebellions and crisis elsewhere in their empire and had little interest in adding to it the Congo, ”¹⁴⁴ with its troublesome rapids, heat, malaria, and sickness. Thus, Stanley came to accept “a mandate from Leopold as

¹⁴² LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.38.

¹⁴³ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.99.

¹⁴⁴ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.x.

secret agent of a special section of the Association, the Comité d'Etude du Haut Congo, or Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo.”¹⁴⁵

Although Stanley “is conventionally remembered as the man who had years earlier found the missing explorer David Livingstone, by far his greatest impact on history came from the five years he spent staking out the Congo for Leopold.”¹⁴⁶ Just to mention, the first station was founded in February 1880 at Vivi, and by 1884 Mr. Stanley had established twenty-two stations on the Congo and its tributaries.

The Comité d'Etude du Haut Congo was to become the International Association of the Congo. It had “the explicit purpose of civilizing the local indigenous populations, abolishing the slave trade and, in order to obtain recognition by the great powers, opening up the region to free trade.”¹⁴⁷ But, by a gradual process of evolution, from being international, in name at least, it became a purely Belgian enterprise.

¹⁴⁵ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.39.

¹⁴⁶ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.x.

¹⁴⁷ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xiv.

“The rapidly changing character of the International Association”¹⁴⁸ could not but arose the other European Powers. The rivalry for Africa was becoming more and more intense.

The participants realized that the prize was too great to be lost by the risk of war, thus, the idea of an international conference “first suggested by Portugal, was later taken up by Bismarck, who, after sounding the opinions of the other powers, was encouraged to bring it about.”¹⁴⁹

This conference, “the first big colonial one in modern times, was held at Berlin between November 15th, 1884, and February 26th, 1885, to discuss outstanding problems connected with West Africa.”¹⁵⁰ It was there that “the European powers began the process of dividing the spoils in Africa.”¹⁵¹

In fact, Bismarck issued invitations to almost all of the European nations and to the United States: in all, the Conference gathered fourteen powers. But of these fourteen powers only five were of real

¹⁴⁸ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.40.

¹⁴⁹ BOAHEN, A.A., 1990. *Africa Under Colonial Domination: 1880-1935*. London: Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press; Paris: Unesco, pp.15.

¹⁵⁰ CROWE, S.E., 1942. *The Berlin West African Conference*. London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, pp.5.

¹⁵¹ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xi.

importance: France, Germany, Great Britain, Portugal, and “the International Association of the Congo, which had no legal representation there at all, and which was in reality only a cloak to hide the ambitions of Leopold II, King of the Belgians.”¹⁵²

The deliberations of the Conference ended on the 26th of February 1885 by the signature of a General Act.

It “undertook to regularize the African contest already well under way by laying down general rules designed to avert dangerous clashes.”¹⁵³

However, as Crowe stresses, when its regulations are studied, it can be seen that they all failed of their purpose: if there was to be free trade in the basin and mouths of the Congo, and free navigation of the Congo and the Niger, actually highly monopolistic systems of trade were set up in both these regions. Moreover, while “Lofty ideals and philanthropic intentions were loudly enunciated by delegates of every country to the conference”¹⁵⁴, the basin of the Congo became the scene of some of the worst brutalities in colonial history.

¹⁵² CROWE, S.E, 1942. *The Berlin West African Conference*. London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, pp.5.

¹⁵³ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.41.

¹⁵⁴ CROWE, S.E, 1942. *The Berlin West African Conference*. London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, pp.3.

“In the absence of any permanent international organization or other supervising agency the General Act served more as an ideal than as a legislative enactment in the contests that followed.”¹⁵⁵

At this conference King Leopold emerged as its greatest victor. Leopold in fact, with a mixture of astuteness and energy succeeded in deceiving all the great powers, as to the real nature of his aims.

By the time the West African Conference opened he had in fact succeeded in obtaining the recognition of the flag of the Association from three great powers: the United States, France, and Germany. In particular, Leopold’s motive in obtaining the recognition of the United States “appears to have been not only to strengthen his legal position, but also to advertise to the world at large his adherence to the principle of free trade...and to win for himself the general sympathy of the powers.”¹⁵⁶ As far as France is concerned, she was convinced –like all the other powers- that the Association would be forced to sell its possessions on account of its precarious financial position. While,

¹⁵⁵ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.41.

¹⁵⁶ CROWE, S.E., 1942. *The Berlin West African Conference*. London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, pp.80.

Germany came to support the Association because of his fear of French tariffs on the Congo.

It was this, the most surprising aspect of the Berlin Conference: it agreed that the Congo should be the personal property of Leopold II. At the conference Prince Bismarck said that all the powers render justice to the lofty object of his work; “we all know the efforts and the sacrifices by means of which he has brought it to the point where it is today; we all entertain the wish that the most complete success may crown an enterprise that must so usefully promote the views which have directed the Conference.”¹⁵⁷

Leopold then proclaimed the existence of the Etat Indépendent du Congo or, as it was known in English, the Congo Free State. In April 1885 the Belgian Chamber ratified this decision. It authorized King Leopold “to be the chief of the state founded in Africa by the International Association of the Congo,” and declared that “the union between Belgium and the new State of the Congo shall be exclusively

¹⁵⁷ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1971. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad; An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism* Edited by Robert Kimbrough. New York; London: Norton&Company, pp.88.

personal’.”¹⁵⁸ This regularized the position of King Leopold, who took the title of King-Sovereign, and sometimes in future years would refer to himself as the Congo’s ‘proprietor’.

He “began employing his new and practically unrestricted authority.”¹⁵⁹ We must consider that the Congo Free State’s inhabitants “were armed only with spears or antiquated muskets left over from slave-trading days, while the king put together a 19,000-man private army.”¹⁶⁰

In 1891 a secret decree was issued reserving to the state the monopoly of ivory and rubber in all ‘vacant lands’. No definition had been given as to what constituted the “vacant lands” which became the property of the state, “but the effect of the later decrees was to assign to the government an absolute proprietary right over nearly the whole country; a native could not even leave his village without a special

¹⁵⁸ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.101.

¹⁵⁹ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.42.

¹⁶⁰ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xi.

permit.”¹⁶¹ These lands in fact amounted “to nearly half of the entire area of more than 900,000 square miles.”¹⁶²

He had never seen the Congo, but the Congo was the world’s major colony owned by one man only.

As Mr. Stephen Gwynne has remarked, “the slave-owner no longer sees the slaves at work, but sits at home and receives his dividends.”¹⁶³ The King in fact chose to stay in Europe, “where he spent his Congo profits on ground buildings and public monuments in Belgium, a huge array of clothes for his teenaged mistress, and an expanding array of properties on the French Riviera.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.114.

¹⁶² LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.42.

¹⁶³ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.161.

¹⁶⁴ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xvi.

3.1.1. The Enemies of the Congo Free State

By 1890 reports were going into circulation concerning breaches of the Berlin Act in the Congo.

To curry diplomatic favor, Leopold had allowed many Protestant missionaries into the territory. Some of them were appalled by what they saw in the Congo and described it in articles in church magazines and in speeches in the United States and Europe. “Africans whipped to death, rivers full of corps, and a detail that quickly seared itself into the world’s imagination -piles of severed hands.”¹⁶⁵ In fact, as Adam Hochschild well explains, Leopold’s white officers often demanded of their black conscripts a dead rebel’s hand for each bullet issued to the soldier, as proof that it had not been wasted in hunting, or saved for use in a mutiny. Sometimes, if a soldier had fired at someone and missed, he would cut the hand off a living person, in order not to have to brave his officer’s wrath.

The British press began championing the black man’s cause in 1901, and two years later, “the House of Commons agreed without a

¹⁶⁵ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xv.

division that measures may be adopted to abate the evils prevalent in that state.”¹⁶⁶

As Hochschild says, around 1900, Leopold’s most formidable enemy surfaced in Europe: Edmund D. Morel.

He worked for a British shipping company which had the monopoly on all cargo traffic between the Congo and Belgium. Morel noticed that the ships which steamed in from the Congo contained valuable cargoes of rubber and ivory; But when they headed to Africa, they carried no merchandise in exchange. Instead, the ships carried soldiers and large quantities of firearms and ammunition.

“I was giddy and appalled at the cumulative significance of my discoveries’, he wrote later. ‘It must be bad enough to stumble upon a murder. I had stumbled upon a secret society of murderers with a King for a croniman’.”¹⁶⁷ Morel started to protest and he was filled with determination to do his best to expose and destroy what he then knew to be a legalized infamy accompanied by unimaginable barbarities and responsible for a vast destruction of human life.

¹⁶⁶ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.115.

¹⁶⁷ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xv.

As he said, it was the old story of evil and greed and lust perpetrated upon a weaker people, “but never before, assuredly, has the hypocrisy with which such deeds have been cloaked, attained to heights so sublime.”¹⁶⁸

The public agitation against the Congo Free State were greatly strengthened by the publication in February 1904 of a report by Mr. Roger Casement, then British consul at Boma, on a journey which he had made through the middle Congo region in 1903.

His report “reviewed in detail the evidence of the murders, slave-dealings, mutilations inflicted on the natives and other barbarisms of the Belgian administration in the Congo.”¹⁶⁹

It was in many ways a model for the reports that began to be produced more than 50 years later by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations.

In his ‘The Congo Report’ he wrote that the most striking change observed during his journey into the interior was the great reduction observable everywhere in native life. “Communities I had formerly

¹⁶⁸ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.161.

¹⁶⁹ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.61.

known as large and flourishing centers of population were entirely gone, or now exist in such diminished numbers as to be no longer recognizable.”¹⁷⁰ These people had in fact decided to abandon their homes, and the great majority of them crossed over into the French territory on the North Shores of Stanley Pool. When he visited the three mud huts which served the purpose of the native hospital, all of them dilapidated, and two with the thatched roofs almost gone, he found seventeen sleeping sickness patients, male and female, lying about in the utmost dirt.

Conrad met Casement during his 1890 trip to the Congo and in *The Congo Diary* we read “Made the acquaintance of Mr. Roger Casement, which I should consider as a great pleasure under any circumstances and now it becomes a positive piece of luck.”¹⁷¹

In his letter to Roger Casement he would write “It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerates the Congo State today. It is as if the moral clock had been put back many

¹⁷⁰ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.133.

¹⁷¹ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.150.

hours.”¹⁷² According to Conrad, the Belgians are worse than the seven plagues of Egypt and he is astonished by the fact that in 1903 there exists in Africa a Congo State, created by the act of European Powers where ruthless, systematic cruelty towards the blacks is the basis of administration, and bad faith towards all the other states the basis of commercial policy.

Another person who fully exposed King Leopold II’s regime was a remarkable American visitor, George Washington Williams.

“As a journalist, he had interviewed King Leopold II in Brussels, and, like almost everyone, was charmed by the apparently modest and altruistic monarch.”¹⁷³

But he completely changed his mind when he reached the Congo. There he wrote one of the great documents of human rights reporting, ‘An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo.’

¹⁷² CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.xi.

¹⁷³ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.12.

“Published in many American and European newspapers, it caused Leopold considerable embarrassment.”¹⁷⁴

In his ‘open letter’ he wrote that all honest people will be shocked to know by what groveling means the fraud in the Congo was consummated. For instance, as he explained, a number of electric batteries had been purchased in London, and when attached to the arm under the coat, communicated with a band of ribbon which passed over the palm of the white man’s hand, and when he gave the black man a cordial grasp of the hand the latter was greatly surprised to find the former so strong. When the native inquired about the disparity of strength between himself and his white brother, he was told that the white man could pull up trees and perform the most prodigious feats of strength. “By such means as these, too silly and disgusting to mention, and a few boxes of gin, whole villages have been signed away to your Majesty...”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴Ibidem, pp.13.

¹⁷⁵ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.121.

It reminds us W. Holman Bentley's words: "These poor inland folk believe that we are gods, that we send the rain, and can withhold it at will."¹⁷⁶

Williams continued saying that the natives everywhere complained that their land has been taken from them by force; that the Government was cruel and arbitrary, and declared that they neither loved nor respected the Government and its flag. In fact, King Leopold's Government has sequestered their land, burned their towns, stolen their property, enslaved their women and children, and committed other crimes too numerous to mention in detail.

In his conclusions he wrote: "All the crimes perpetrated in the Congo have been done in your name, and you must answer at the bar of Public Sentiment for the misgovernment of a people, whose lives and fortunes were entrusted to you by the august Conference of Berlin, 1884-1885."¹⁷⁷

The efforts of Morel, Casement, Williams, missionaries and their supporters succeeded in making the forced labor system of King

¹⁷⁶ CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Pinguin Books, pp.135.

¹⁷⁷ CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company, pp.130.

Leopold's Congo the most widely publicized human rights scandal of its time. "The king was condemned in the press, poets thundered against him, and cartoonists throughout Europe portrayed him surrounded by human skulls and severed hands."¹⁷⁸

"The natural solution was that placed by the King before the Belgian Parliament in June, 1906-the annexation of the Congo Free State and the erection under a colonial ministry of a complete administrative system based on a program of gradual development rather than of exploitation."¹⁷⁹

After extended negotiations with the king, the Congo Free State became a Belgian colony on November 15, 1908.

King Leopold died the following year, "having made a profit from the territory conservatively estimated as equal to more than \$1.1 billion in the American dollars of a century later."¹⁸⁰

During the reign of his successor, Albert. "The blacks were emancipated from the virtual slavery of the previous system, given

¹⁷⁸ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xvi.

¹⁷⁹ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.45.

¹⁸⁰ MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso, pp.xvi.

local civil rights, and, in 1913, granted free lands for cultivation as they pleased.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms, pp.46.

3.2. Kurtz as a symbol of Imperialism

Heart of Darkness is the story of the journey of Marlow into ‘darkest Africa’. What Marlow sees in the Congo is “a ferocious and imbecile rapacity that staggers even his tempered imagination. Everywhere he looks there is a wholesale murder, rapine, brutality, and waste as the merry dance of death and trade goes on.”¹⁸²

Conrad, in his essay *Geography and Some Explorers*, defines the exploitation of the Congo as “the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration”¹⁸³.

Conrad, in fact, on his Congo expedition “came up against the real face of colonialism, with its greed and corruption, and the suffering it caused native populations.”¹⁸⁴

As Brantlinger says, the facts of exploitation in the Congo perhaps distressed Conrad less than the lying idealism that disguised it; all the

¹⁸² MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.355.

¹⁸³ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of darkness: a critical and contextual discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.61.

¹⁸⁴ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.x.

traditional ideals of honor, glory, conscience, had been committed to the upholding of a gigantic and atrocious fraud. For Conrad “the worst feature of imperialism may have been not violence but the lying propaganda used to cover its bloody tracks.”¹⁸⁵

In fact, “The Congo Free State was effectually the private property of Leopold; and though he proclaimed himself a light-bringer, later historians amply confirmed the extent of the despoliation and rapacity that flourished in his name.”¹⁸⁶

The true nature of European philanthropy in the Congo is revealed to Marlow by the “black shadows of disease and starvation, left to die in the ‘greenish gloom’, whom he sees at the outer station. In any case, from the moment he sets foot in the Congo, Marlow is clear about the meaning of ‘the merry dance of death and trade’.”¹⁸⁷

Marlow is repeatedly astonished by the Europeans’ dementia as they play at being colonialists. For instance, “a French man-of-war fires idiotically into the continent at unseen ‘enemies’; engineers try to level a mountain and prisoners dig enormous holes without plan or

¹⁸⁵ BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.259.

¹⁸⁶ WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad’s Heart of darkness: a critical and contextual discussion*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.60.

¹⁸⁷ BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.261-2.

reason; agents brainlessly fire their Winchesters at anything that moves; machinery and parts are requisitioned and then allowed to rot.”¹⁸⁸

“The sense of utter irrationality, of some horrible meaninglessness, increases as Marlow proceeds up the river, to hear more and more about the successful yet frightful Kurtz, whom he finally meets.”¹⁸⁹ In fact, “The deeper Marlow plunges into Africa and the closer he comes to Kurtz, the more surely does he apprehend the impulses of human nature at work transforming Africa into a mass grave.”¹⁹⁰

According to Robert Kimbrough, “All of Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz: safe, civilized, masculine, liberate, Christian, and

¹⁸⁸ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.355.

¹⁸⁹ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.39.

¹⁹⁰ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.360.

dead.”¹⁹¹ He is “the highly respected representative of a society which would have us believe it is benign, although in fact it is vicious.”¹⁹²

Kurtz is outstanding on many levels. He is a practitioner of several arts: he is a painter (he creates *a small sketch in oils* of a woman carrying a torch that Marlow will find at the Central Station), a musician, a political orator, a journalist, and “the author of, among other works, a seventeen-page report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs.”¹⁹³

And as if this was not enough, Kurtz is “an emissary of pity, and science, and progress.”¹⁹⁴ He “is of the new gang of virtue, as opposed to the common run of agents. He has higher intelligence, wider sympathies, a singleness of purpose”¹⁹⁵ which is needed for the guidance of the cause entrusted to colonialists by Europe.

¹⁹¹ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.xiii

¹⁹² CONRAD, J. and C.B. COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook.* Basingstoke; London: MacMillan, pp.64.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*, pp.64.

¹⁹⁴ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.79.

¹⁹⁵ SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad's Western World.* London; New York: Cambridge University press, pp.94.

According to C.B. Cox, he is at once the most idealistic and the most practically successful of all the agents of the Belgian exploitation of the Congo.

It is while Marlow is travelling up-river towards Kurtz and his station that he thinks over his knowledge of Kurtz:

“Hadn’t I been told in all the tones of jealousy and admiration that he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together?”¹⁹⁶

Kurtz, moreover, who is ‘remarkable’ and ‘exceptional’, is talked of by everyone, is expected to go far: ‘Oh, he will go far, very far...He will be a somebody in the Administration before long.’

But Kurtz has been madden by the tropics. Marlow specifically says that Kurtz’s intellect was undamaged. “Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear...But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether!* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.113.

¹⁹⁷CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether!* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.144-5.

As M. Moutet says « Kurtz est dévoré par la séduction de l'horreur. »¹⁹⁸ He has in fact “exercised his rule with an extreme of cruelty [...] he has given himself to unnamable acts of lust,”¹⁹⁹ and he has been worshipped in a moral obscenity as a savage god. “Experiencing the seemingly absolute indifference of the African social and physical ‘darkness,’ Kurtz’s will knows no bounds.”²⁰⁰

Conrad “shows us an Africa that remains immense, forbidding, even sinister, one that exacts a terrible vengeance on those who are blind and stupid enough to get lost in it.”²⁰¹ And this European ‘Knight’ who “set out on a crusade to win the hearts and minds of a lesser people, was ignorant of the degree to which Africa was dangerous, wild, timeless, feminine, unfettered by letters, religious and vibrant.”²⁰² Thus, Kurtz “had been the apostle of progress who had been destroyed by his own imagination and vitality to become at the

¹⁹⁸ PACCAUD-HUGUET, J., 2002. *Heart of Darkness, Une Leçon de Ténèbres*. Paris : Lettres Modernes Minard, pp.18.

¹⁹⁹ CONRAD, J. and C.B. COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook*. Basingstoke; London: MacMillan, pp.64.

²⁰⁰ BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.125.

²⁰¹ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.356.

²⁰² CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/ Joseph Conrad*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.xiii.

same time the fanatical enemy and the obsessed slave of the savage culture he had wished to redeem and westernize.”²⁰³

As Falinski points out, “The bond with the wilderness can be a dangerous one. Primeval nature is brooding and mysterious.”²⁰⁴

The figure of the Native Woman described in *Heart of Darkness* may be quite emblematic. She represents Africa and that ‘terrible vengeance exacted on those who are stupid enough to get lost in it’. She is “female, black, stunningly coiffured, emotive.”²⁰⁵ Here is her introduction: “She was savage and superb, wild-eyed, and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress...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.”²⁰⁶

While Kurtz’s African woman has deflated his pride, his European Intended has helped to puff it up. According to Kimbrough, the

²⁰³ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.40.

²⁰⁴ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.xxiv.

²⁰⁵ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/ Joseph Conrad*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.xiii-xiv.

²⁰⁶ FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb, pp.108.

Intended represents Europe. She is helpless, sexually repressed, living in black, in a place of darkness.

In other words, Kurtz has gone native. Brantlinger says that in one sense, going native was universal, because every traveler must to some extent adopt the customs of the country, eat its food, learn its language, but Kurtz does something worse: he betrays the ideals of the civilization he is importing from Europe.

Kurtz “has moved into realms where men like Marlow, ordinary, ‘normal’ men who dwell in the sunlight of civilization, cannot follow.”²⁰⁷

The cannibals “are ultimately perceived as more civilized in their capacity for restraint than Kurtz, who has completely reverted to savagery in the name of progress and enlightenment.”²⁰⁸

As M. Moutet says, « En Afrique les ‘pèlerins’ occidentaux du Progrès [...] ouvrent des clairières dans la jungle, dont ils prétendent nier ainsi le caractère impénétrable. En réalité, ils ne font pas reculer

²⁰⁷ DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, pp.72.

²⁰⁸ ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford university press, pp.104.

la jungle, mais s'en retrouvent prisonniers, cernés et menacés par ce qu'ils croyaient maîtriser. »²⁰⁹

As Brantlinger says, many missionaries were susceptible to going native; they frequently expressed fears about being converted to heathenism instead of converting the heathen. For instance, J.S. Moffat referring to missionaries says that they “had to be deeply imbued with God’s spirit in order to have strength to stand against the deadening and corrupting influence around [them].”²¹⁰ For him, missionaries were men looking forward to getting back to the sweet air and bright sunshine after being in a coal-mine. Dominique Mannoni says that in European writings about Africa the savage is identified with the unconscious, with a certain image of the instincts; while civilized man is painfully divided between the desire to ‘correct’ the ‘errors’ of the savages and the desire to identify himself with them in his search for some lost paradise.

According to Brantlinger, Kurtz is a product of this painful division.

“Yet not even Marlow sees Kurtz’s going native as a step toward the

²⁰⁹ PACCAUD-HUGUET, J., 2002. *Heart of Darkness, Une Leçon de Ténèbres*. Paris : Lettres Modernes Minard, pp.18.

²¹⁰ BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp.194.

recovery of a lost paradise; it is instead a fall into hell, into the darkness of self-disintegration.”²¹¹

At this point we question, *is it possible to be both principled and successful in an imperialist context?*

As Raval highlights, it is Kurtz’s conviction that every station should be a centre for trade, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing, because the era of great industrial development and imperialist success was also the era of idealism in philosophy and politics.

Imperialism and idealism “are portrayed as depending upon each other in *Heart of Darkness*, but at the same time their relationship is not perceived as a genuine collaboration or mixing.”²¹²

Marlow’s interest for Kurtz starts to develop because, as Raval suggests, Kurtz has come out ‘equipped with moral ideas of some sort.’ Marlow wants to see whether Kurtz can unite idealism and imperialism.

When Marlow finds himself thinking of Kurtz and regretting the fact that Kurtz is now dead – which he assumes to be the case, he says “Of

²¹¹ Ibidem, pp.195.

²¹² HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.173.

all his gifts the one that stood out preeminently, was his ability to talk, his words ...”²¹³ “Even after the actual physical shock of Kurtz’s appearance and, finally, of his death, Marlow insists: “The voice was gone. What else had been there?”²¹⁴

Right at the start of his narrative Marlow makes it clear that, for him, imperialism can only be justified by having an idea behind it: “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it 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.” ...”²¹⁵

But as David Daiches questions, can an ‘idea’ justify robbery and exploitation?

What is evident is that colonialists “grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence,

²¹³ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 113-4.

²¹⁴ CONRAD, J. and C.B. COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook*. Basingstoke; London: MacMillan, pp.67.

²¹⁵ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.50-1.

aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind.”²¹⁶

Marlow realizes that Kurtz’s idealism cannot be put into practice; His “ideas are as impractical as are those of his aunt.”²¹⁷ And “The plentitude he had hoped to encounter is merely the culmination of the hollowness which is their essence: ‘the manager with nothing within him’, he is ‘hollow at the core’.”²¹⁸

Marlow learns that “a successful combining of trade and idealism has not taken place, that Kurtz’s ideals –his “idea” –consist but of words.”²¹⁹

“Oh, yes, I heard more than enough. And I was right, too. A voice. He was very little more than a voice.”²²⁰

In the face of the failure of Kurtz’s voice and spirit, “Marlow’s own voice becomes increasingly more strident”²²¹: he now sees Kurtz as ‘an atrocious phantom’, a ‘pitiful Jupiter’; he realizes that Kurtz’s

²¹⁶ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.38.

²¹⁷ HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.178.

²¹⁸ ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford university press, pp.100.

²¹⁹ HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.181.

²²⁰ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/ Joseph Conrad*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press., pp.115.

²²¹ BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.118.

exalted discourse, is “an immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense.”²²²

The report Kurtz wrote for the International Society for the suppression of Savage Customs is quite emblematic:

“It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for.”²²³ In fact, this report “begins with soaring optimistic eloquence in discussing the good the white man can do among these primitive people; but at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: ‘Exterminate all the brutes’.”²²⁴

The figure of the young Russian is revealing in *Heart of Darkness*. He worships Kurtz for his ideas, for his idealism; he repeats several times that Kurtz has enlarged his mind: “You don’t talk with that man – you listen to him.”²²⁵ “It seems that the Russian’s role in

²²²CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether*/ Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press,, pp.115.

²²³Ibidem, pp.117.

²²⁴DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.40.

²²⁵CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether*/ Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press,, pp.123.

Heart of Darkness is to exemplify the fatal attraction that pure idealism can present to a particular kind of man; one naïve, disinterested and romantic.”²²⁶

The fact that the Russian is young is of great significance too. Youth is the time of idealism.

His admiration for Kurtz leads him unreservedly to defend his brutal actions , such as the heads on the poles, the attack on the steamer, and even the offer of violence and death to himself in order to obtain some ivory.

So, what is wrong with idealism? It is “its impracticability, its failure to engage with the reality of humanity, its belief in a mankind without the negative impulses and potentialities which a lack of external restraint will release.”²²⁷

Kurtz is distinguished from the other white men Marlow meets in Africa by the fact that he really has believed in his idea, but he has gone mad and he has become obsessed with money and power. “And when Marlow finds him shortly before his death, he is a grotesque,

²²⁶ HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.192.

²²⁷ Ibidem, pp.199.

emaciated shadow whose horrible physical deterioration truly reflects his inner emptiness.”²²⁸

Thus, “That idealism that can be happily married to profitable trade, is so much hot air. It is language without any substantial referent, words as ‘the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness’ rather than as ‘the pulsating stream of light.’”²²⁹

In fact, unfortunately, “this high idealism is undermined by a lack of morality and discipline, so the great mission turns into a macabre farce.”²³⁰

We read in a passage: “My intended, my station, my career, my ideas...”²³¹ It’s the desire for possession which corrupts human relationships, work and intellect. As Hawthorn says, Marlow learns that the appetite for more ivory had got the better of the less material aspirations. According to him, the attempt to marry material and

²²⁸ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.357.

²²⁹ HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.181.

²³⁰ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.357.

²³¹ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/ Joseph Conrad*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.147.

immaterial aspirations ends always in the taking over of the latter by the former. “The attempt to combine trade and idealism, to reconcile the gaining of immense profit with philanthropic and altruistic ideals, has completely corrupted those ideals.”²³²

In the course of his African experiences Marlow confirms that imperialism it is not actually subservient to any idea: “Idealistic beliefs help to convince people of the worth of imperialism. In other words, the link between idealism and imperialism is not fortuitous, it is functional.”²³³

“Kurtz’s collapse indicates that despite its achievements and vast pretensions, Europe lacked the moral capital to back its venture into Africa.”²³⁴

Before dying there is Kurtz’s famous ejaculation: ‘The horror! The horror!’.

Marlow says “He had summed up-he had judged. ‘The Horror!’ He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction...It was an affirmation, a

²³² HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.198.

²³³ Ibidem, pp.182.

²³⁴ MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International, pp.358.

moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!”²³⁵.

There might be alternative readings.

Hawthorn says that Marlow might admire Kurtz for his despairing cry because Marlow remains convinced of the need for ideals even in the face of their evident powerlessness.

While, according to Harold Bloom, Kurtz’s voice is hollow and without self-awareness except for this single self-condemning insight. “This is as far as Conrad takes us into the particular center of Kurtz’s experience.”²³⁶

Thus, it can also be seen as ‘a moral victory’, as it involves a recognition of the betrayal of his previous ideals: “he does not attempt to conceal or deny the depth of his degeneration, the extent of his moral collapse. And in a context characterized primarily by duplicity and dishonesty, this openness stands out as a moral victory.”²³⁷ So, “he achieved in the end ‘his own exalted and terrible degradation’ through having seen through everything and come to believe in

²³⁵ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether!* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.151.

²³⁶ BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers, pp.125.

²³⁷ HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a division of Hodder & Stoughton, pp.196.

absolutely nothing.”²³⁸ As Marlow says, he had to deal with a being to whom he could not appeal in the name of anything high or low.

Moreover, according to Marlow, Kurtz’s death-bed cry is a ‘moment of complete knowledge’. He asserts that ‘the horror’ has to do not only with Kurtz’s unspeakable history, but also with the world at large, “wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness.”²³⁹

For Conrad makes it quite clear that “the heart of darkness is a symbolic experience of what lies at the heart of much human profession and activity.”²⁴⁰ As Daiches states, commerce, progress, imperialism, politics, society are not real, but conscious or unconscious covers for something else, perhaps merely for a great nothingness.

An alternative reading is offered by Robert Kimbrough. He says that when Kurtz utters ‘The horror! The horror!’ Europe and Africa collide. Kurtz realizes that all he has been nurtured to believe in is a horror. “He has been stripped of his own culture and stands both

²³⁸ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.40.

²³⁹ CONRAD, J. and C.B. COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook*. Basingstoke; London: MacMillan, pp.66.

²⁴⁰ DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.41.

literally and figuratively naked before another; he has been exposed to desire but cannot comprehend it through some established framework.”²⁴¹ To Kurtz, Europe and Africa have both become nightmares and now it is between them that he must make his choice. Kimbrough also adds that the Intended repressed sexuality is part of Kurtz’s horror. Through his carnal knowledge of Africa he came into self-knowledge of his European hollowness, but he is unable to share that knowledge.

According to Michael J. Larsen, *Heart of Darkness* gives us a powerful and compelling portrayal of evil as modern man sees it: in economic rather than in metaphysical or in religious terms. It is an evil more insidious than any devil of religion, folklore, or ancient mythology. “The economic machine, with its lawyers, accountants, managers, and clerks, turns Africa into a graveyard in order to accumulate a material-ivory-that has no practical use. The facts are hideous and unreal; but that’s business.”²⁴²

²⁴¹ CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.xix.

²⁴² MURSIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983.* Milano: Mursia International, pp.361.

As Sven Lindqvist says, “European world expansion, accompanied as it was by a shameless defense of extermination, created habits of thought and political precedents that made way for new outrages, finally culminating in the most horrendous of them all: the Holocaust.”²⁴³

²⁴³ LINDQVIST, S., 1996. *Exterminate All the Brutes*. New York: New Press, pp.12.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the work states that one of the main key words of *Heart of Darkness* is ambiguity. Questions often don't find answers, and not because the reader is not good enough to infer them, but because they are intentionally concealed.

In particular, the thesis detects, and focuses upon, three forms of ambiguity.

The first concerns the ambiguous relationship between Conrad and his character, Marlow. While, initially, one cannot but have the impression to deal with an autobiography, a deeper analysis shows that the same Conrad would have detested such a kind of belief. Simply, Marlow is Conrad at the same time that he is neither.

Even in the face of a huge number of striking resemblances between Conrad and Marlow, the former astonishes us describing the latter as a mere acquaintance which happened to ripen into friendship.

Thus, in the world of *Heart of Darkness*, even what seems to be obvious, it is not.

Here, the thesis derives ambiguity not only from Conrad's idea of explicitness as a destroyer of illusion, but also from his own roots and personality.

The second concerns the ambiguity of the title.

The work analyzes each component of the phrase “(THE) *Heart of Darkness*”, and shows that, they all have various meanings attached to, but none of them is sure at all. The ambiguity of the title may serve to emphasize the darkness which is here related to the Dark Continent, to Kurtz's moral disintegration, and last but not least, to the guilt of the white man and of civilization.

The work also detects another kind of ambiguity in the story narrated by Conrad, and it concerns the figure of Kurtz. He is more the antagonist than the protagonist of *Heart of Darkness*, but he is not depicted as a devil with a forked little beard and a hooked nose. We are told he is outstanding on many levels. He is in fact a practitioner of several arts (he is a painter, a musician, a political orator, a writer) and he is also an emissary of pity, and science, and progress. However, he has also exercised his rule with an extreme of cruelty and he has given himself to unnamable acts of lust.

He perfectly embodies the European hypocrisy and ambiguity. He represents a society which would have us believe it is benign, although in fact it is vicious. Thus this time, it is not just Conrad to be ‘ambiguous’, but imperialism which moves between two opposites: high idealism and murder/exploitation.

The thesis’s central idea of ambiguity as one of *Heart of Darkness*’s key words, has not been much exploited by critics. The word was simply found in some of the sources analyzed and given much importance, as seen as a possible answer or, it would be better to say, a non-answer, to many of the insoluble questions.

Finally, we might quote J.H. Miller who perfectly reflects the idea of the present work. In *Heart of Darkness*, “what can be seen is only what can be seen; the darkness is in principle invisible and remains invisible.”

Bibliography

The text of *Heart of Darkness* and Criticism

CONRAD, J., 1946. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether: Three Stories/* by Joseph Conrad. London: Dent.

CONRAD, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness with The Congo Diary*; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Hampson. London: Penguin Books.

CONRAD, J. and A.J.HOPPE', 1967. *Youth: a Narrative; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether*. London: Dent; New York: Dutton.

CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1971. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad; An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism* Edited by Robert Kimbrough. New York; London: Norton&Company.

CONRAD, J. and R.KIMBROUGH, 1984. *Youth; Heart of Darkness; The End of the Tether/* Joseph Conrad; Edited with an Introduction of Robert Kimbrough. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

CONRAD, J. and P.B.ARMSTRONG and R.KIMROUGH, 2006. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. New York; London: W. W. Norton&Company.

CONRAD, J. and C.B.COX, 1981. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes: a Casebook*. Basingstoke; London: MacMillan.

FALINSKI, J., 1995. *Heart of Darkness/ Joseph Conrad*. Genova: Cideb.

STEVENSON, R.L., 1991. *Heart of Darkness: A Selection Passages*. Rapallo (GE): Cideb.

VAUGHAN L.and J.BUTLER, 2003. *Heart of Darkness*. Canterbury: Black Cat; Genova: Cideb.

WATTS, C., 1997. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: a Critical and Contextual Discussion*. Milano: Mursia International.

Critical Studies on Conrad

- BAINES, J., 1967. *Conrad*. Milano: U. Mursia.
- BLOOM, H., 1986. *Joseph Conrad*. Chelsea House Publishers.
- BRADBROOK, M.C., 1966. *Joseph Conrad*. New York: Russell & Russell.
- DAICHES, D., 1960. *The Novel and the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- DOWDEN, W.S., 1970. *Joseph Conrad: The Imaged Style*. Nashville: Vanderbilt.
- ERDINAST-VULCAN, D., 1999. *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- GOGOWILT, C.L., 1995. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford: Stanford university press.
- GUERARD, A.J., 1966. *Conrad the Novelist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- GURKO, L., 1962. *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- HAMMER, R.D., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives*. Washington: Three Continents Press.
- HAWTHORN, J., 1990. *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London (etc.): E. Arnold, a Division of Hodder & Stoughton.
- KIRSCHNER, P., 1968. *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist*. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd.
- LEVINE, G., 1991. *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.
- MURSAIA, U. and M.CURRELI, 1988. *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Papers from the International Conrad Conference: University of Pisa, September 7th-11th 1983*. Milano: Mursia International.

- NEWHOUSE, N.H., 1966. *Joseph Conrad*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.
- SHERRY, N., 1971. *Conrad's Western World*. London; New York: Cambridge University press.
- SHERRY, N., 1973. *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- STAPE, J.H., 1996. *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge (etc.): Cambridge University Press.
- STRINGER, J., 1996. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WATTS, C., 1993. *A Preface to Conrad*. London; New York: Longman.
- WILLISON, I., and W. GOULD, and W.CHERNAIK, 1996. *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*. London: MacMillan Press.

African Studies

- ADE AJAYI, J.F., 1998. *Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*. Oxford: James Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press; Paris: Unesco.
- BOAHEN, A.A., 1990. *Africa Under Colonial Domination: 1880-1935*. London: Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press; Paris: Unesco.
- BRANTLINGER, P., 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.
- CROWE, S.E., 1942. *The Berlin West African Conference*. London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co.
- DEVLIN, L., 2007. *Chief of Station, Congo: a Memoir of 1960-67*. New York: Public Affairs.
- HOCHSCHILD, A., 1998. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- LANCASTER HOSKINS, H., 1969. *European Imperialism in Africa*. Michigan: University Microfilms.
- LINDQVIST, S., 1996. *Exterminate All the Brutes*. New York: New Press.
- MARCHAL, J., 2008. *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts : Colonial Exploitation in the Congo*. London, New York: Verso.
- MC CLURE, J.A., 1994. *Late Imperial Romance*. London:Verso.
- NADEL, G. H., and P.CURTIS, 1964. *Imperialism and Colonialism*. New York: the MacMillan Company; London: Collier MacMillan.
- PHILLIPS, A., 1989. *The Enigma of Colonialism*. London: James Currey.
- ROBINSON, R., and J.GALLAGHER, and A.DENNY, 1961. *Africa and the Victorians*. London: The Macmillan Press.
- SONCINI FRATTA, A., 2001. *4 : Congo - Kinshasa*. Bologna: Clueb.
- STEARNS, J.K., 2011. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*. New York: Public Affairs.

Conrad's works

- CONRAD, J., 1923. *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company.
- CONRAD, J., 1926. *Last Essays*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- CONRAD, J., 1945. *The Nigger of the Narcissus; Typhoon; The Shadow-line*. London: Dent; New York: Dutton.
- CONRAD, J., 1946. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record: Some Reminiscences*. London: Dent.
- CONRAD, J., 1949. *Notes on Life and Letters*. London: Dent.

Conrad's Letters

CONRAD, J., and Z. NAJDER and H. CARROLL, 1964. *Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends*. London (etc.): Oxford University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1983. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 1:1861-1897*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1986. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 2:1898-1902*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1988. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 3:1903-1907*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1990. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 4:1908-1911*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONRAD, J., and F.R.KARL, and L.DAVIES, 1996. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad Volume 5:1912-1916*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WATTS, C.T., 1969. *Joseph Conrad's Letters to Cunninghame Graham*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

French Contributions

DUMOLIN, M., 2012. *Du Congo Belge à la République du Congo*. Bruxelles : P.I.E. Peter Lang.

CESAIRE, A., 1967. *Une Saison au Congo*. Paris : Editions du Seuil.

JEAN AUBRY, G., 1924. *Hommage à Joseph Conrad : 1857-1924*. Paris : Saint-Amand.

MERLIER, M.,1992. *Le Congo de la Colonisation Belge à l'Indépendance*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

PACCAUD-HUGUET, J., 2002. *Heart of Darkness, Une Leçon de Ténèbres*. Paris : Lettres Modernes Minard.

Graphic *Heart of Darkness*

MAGGIONI, M.L., 1997. *The Congo Diary, and Heart of Darkness/Joseph Conrad*. Milano: Garzanti Scuola.