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THEME

**ENIGMATIC BEHAVIOR IN JOSEPH
CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS***

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Dedication

To

The memory of my late mother Amokè Shèrifath Adande and my ageing father Augustin Ndéwénou Adande whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity still ring in my ears.

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May God bless them all.

Table of contents

Contents	Pages
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter One: Introduction to the study.....	1
1.1 Background to the study.....	2
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.3 Purpose of the study.....	7
1.4 Significance of the study.....	7
1.5 Scope and Limitation of the study.....	8
1.6 Methodology and Overview of the Upcoming Chapters.....	9
Chapter two: Literature Review and Clarification of Concepts.....	12
2.1. Literature Review	13
2.2. Clarification of Concepts.....	18
2.2.1. Concept of Psychoanalysis.....	18
2.2.2. A psychoanalysis Approach to the Character of Kurtz.....	20
2.2.3. Concept of Racism.....	22
2.2.3.1. Racism in British literature	25
2.2.3.2. Joseph Conrad between Racism and Realism.....	28
Chapter Three: Joseph Conrad’s perception of Enigmatic behavior in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>.....	40
3.1 Character Review.....	41
3.1.1. Marlow: The Main Character.....	41
3.1.2. Kurtz’s Character.....	43
3.1.3. African Kurtz.....	44

3.2. A Psychological Reference.....	46
3.2.1. A Journey in Quest of Self.....	46
3.2.2. Characters showing enigmatic behavior.....	47
3.2.3. Events and facts illustrating enigmatic behavior.....	48
3.2.4. Themes related to enigmatic behavior.....	49
3.2.5. Figures of Speech demonstrating enigmatic behavior.....	52
Chapter Four: Others perspectives for Conrad’s perception	55
4.1. Other Views about African Cultures and Civilizations	56
4.2. Other Views about Africans’ lives and Welfare.....	60
4.3. Recommendations to others studies	60
Conclusion.....	63
Bibliography.....	67
Annex.....	I

Abstract

Exposing the myth behind colonization and a touch of psychological evaluation that Joseph Conrad is well known for, *Heart of Darkness* is a form of writing which mirrored human thought and the intense suffering of the Africans in the Belgian Congo. Joseph Conrad goes out of his way to suggest that in some sense Marlow's journey is like a dream or a return to our primitive past, an exploration of the dark recesses of the human mind.

Heart of Darkness is a psychological masterpiece, revealing the relationship between subconscious life and conscious motivations. In the text, Conrad reviews the memories of his journey to the Congo: personal nightmare is mixed with his own psychological complexities. He is looking for self-understanding, and showing his own mental picture of the conflicts between savagery and civilization. Many critics have called it the best short novel written in English. It involves the reader in dramatic and decisively difficult moral judgments, which are in parallel with the central characters: Marlow and Kurtz. It is a dramatic, layered, paradoxical and problematic novel: a mixture of autobiography, adventure story, physiological odyssey, comedy, religious drama and a symbolic text.

The novel contains a vast subject, and this thesis is only going to analyze two of its aspects: 1) the characters of Marlow and Kurtz. 2) A review of some literary criticisms. Recent criticisms have divided Conrad's works into two parts: psychological analysis and political explanations. However, the present research work tried to have its own interpretation of the psychological analysis by discussing through an analysis of Kurtz's tragedy, "Enigmatic behavior" which is the transformation of the true nature of human beings and its destructive effects, and eventually concluding that our surroundings, power and greed can shape our true nature if we lack of restraint; if we lack control of our mind.

Keywords: Enigmatic – Tragedy – Kurtz – Transformation – Surroundings.

Chapter One: Introduction to the study

1.1. Background to the Study

Heart of Darkness is one of Conrad's best well-known novels which is full of mysteries through some of its characters. It can be seen as a journey - Marlow's mythical journey in search of the self, in order to bring back a new truth. Through all the pages of the novel, the main character relates his experiences journeying up the Congo River in quest of another white man, Kurtz.

Kurtz never gets to be a flesh-and-blood person. He's a word (introduced quite casually by the whiter-than-white Accountant in the first part of the novel; then a voice, then a set of ideals: always an abstraction. Kurtz has gone into circumstances which call into question how much judgment depends on recognizable contexts (does "civilization" rob people of survival skills?). But Marlow doesn't know this: in the chaos of the journey, he retains hope that Kurtz will provide a clue to a universe with meaning, something more revelatory and profound than all these managers and pilgrims, these mean-spirited profit-driven Great White Hunters can provide. Is Kurtz important in himself, or in his effect on Marlow? Kurtz is more than simply an interesting character, he is an enigma. It is through Marlow and our own desire to discover the true identity of Kurtz, that the power of *Heart of Darkness* becomes apparent. Through Conrad's irony, the reader is informed that, at last, Marlow has created an image of Kurtz that may be the prototype of the man he himself would have liked to be. He thinks that Kurtz can tell him things about himself which he does not know. And so intensely does he feel the possible connection between himself and the man, that he follows him even though he has no clear sense of his behavior. The description of people and landscape is much more figurative than literal: It doesn't push the plot along or explain things, but then neither does the dialogue. The novel can then be seen as an Enigmatic one through the description of the behavior of some characters mainly Kurtz.

Heart of Darkness is a psychological masterpiece, revealing the relationship between subconscious life and conscious motivations. In the text, Conrad

reviews the memories of his journey to the Congo: personal nightmare is mixed with his own psychological complexities. He is looking for self-understanding, and showing his own mental picture of the conflicts between savagery and civilization. Many critics have called it the best short novel written in English. It involves the reader in dramatic and decisively difficult moral judgments, which are in parallel with the central characters: Marlow and Kurtz. It is a book about the discovery of an unknown Africa and the vagueness hidden in the human soul. It emphasizes the interface of personal and social experiences in different conditions: conflicts between personal and public codes. It is about Kurtz, a sophisticated and civilized man whose work in Africa appears to be more of a missionary work. On the other hand, it is a story of identity and a voyage to the inner self. The story is divided into two journeys: a journey into the heart of the Congo, and a journey into the soul of man; implying ethical and psychological darkness. In this story, Conrad looks into the human mind, and has a pessimistic view of it. The mood of the novel is horrific, making a reader think about his/her heart, but it leaves him/her with a glimmering sense of hope.

The novel contains a vast subject, and this study is going to analyze the following aspects: 1) The characters of Marlow and Kurtz. 2) A review of some literary criticisms. Marlow travels to the Congo in search of Kurtz. Eventually these two characters are transformed into different personalities at the end of the journey. Kurtz's role in the tale is symbolically important; his dark evil face and the hollowness in himself which Marlow shares. Marlow has been compared to Kurtz in many parts of the novel, and his thoughts were obsessed with Kurtz. Marlow is faced with a critical moral dilemma. He doubted how he would evaluate Kurtz's personality. The longer he is obsessed with Kurtz, the more he sets himself for the horror of life. Marlow disliked Kurtz's actions, but loved his dominant power with which he controlled the Congo. Despite praise from many authors, such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Conrad's reputation rose only after his death in 1924. Recent criticisms have divided his works into two parts:

psychological analysis and political explanations. However, my research work will try to have its own interpretation of the psychological analysis based on the review of some previous literature and critics.

What can bring an individual to become an enigmatic person and end his or her life like Kurtz's? In every society we have intellectuals who wish to curb bad elements through Art and Literature: Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe just to mention a few, and Joseph Conrad are all great examples of such genius with a common denominator: they were making not only humanistic statements but also political statements. The character of Kurtz is openly a metaphorical figure; he represents a "type" of personality, one that is intelligent, ambitious and capable. But at the sight of money, he turns into an evil genius. His lust for power and wealth in the Congo results in his state of psychosis. The tragic end of Kurtz explains, to some extent, the truthful message Conrad was giving to his countrymen.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Beyond the shield of civilization and into the depths of a primitive, untamed frontier lays the true face of the human soul. It is in the midst of this savagery and unrelenting danger that mankind confronts the brooding nature of his inner self. Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, is the story of one man's insight into life as he embarks on a voyage to the edges of the world. Here, he meets the bitter, yet enlightening forces that eventually shape his outlook on life and his own individuality. Conrad's portrayal of the characters, setting, and symbols, allow the reader to reflect on the true nature of man. The two main characters in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow and Kurtz are used to show the true nature of man, that is, the capacity for good and evil within humanity.

Kurtz no longer obeys the authority of his superiors who believe that he has become too extreme and has come to employ "unsound methods" (Coppola, 1979; Longman, 2000). Marlow is sent to retrieve Kurtz from the evil influences

in the Congo, and a wild journey on a tainted river ensues. Along the way, Marlow learns about the real Kurtz and finds himself identifying with and becoming dangerously fond of the man.

By the time Marlow and Kurtz meet, Marlow is already well aware of the similarities they share. Both are imperialists, and while Marlow detests the treatment of the natives by his employers (Belgian colonists), he also makes apparent his abhorrence toward the Africans. On the other hand, Kurtz abandons the pretense of helping the natives achieve civilization, as displayed by the Europeans. Instead, he adopts their customs and becomes their leader in the never-ending quest for ivory.

When looking up the definition of enigma "a person of puzzling or contradictory character" (Oxford dictionary,2003), Kurtz is somewhat of an enigma because he is portrayed or depicted as an intellectual man with morals however he is also portrayed as "ill." He represents a man who starts with morals reaching for the top without losing those morals. He is a relevance to Marlow because Marlow has heard many good attributes in Kurtz's character, and personality. According to the dictionary, the word enigma means a puzzle or mystery but in the novel, it means a "contradictory character".

The reader of the novel can find in Kurtz a paradox: how he is portrayed as a rare, prodigal man yet ill. Kurtz is a character who is often spoken about but never shown. We are given several expectations of the character but have not yet met him. Kurtz seems to be a character who symbolizes humanity and basic human nature. Unlike the outer station manager, who received his position because he never falls ill and therefore represents the fact that these men are reverted to animals (survival of the fittest, natural selection), Kurtz has fallen ill. He gained his position through his intelligence and genius. For Marlow, Kurtz represents true civilization, sanity, and kindness in a world of savages. However, because Kurtz's station is in the "heart of darkness," great trouble is

foreshadowed. Kurtz is very likely not the "emissary of pity" that he has been made out to be - and if he is, that may change during the course of the book.

Kurtz is a mystery to both Marlow and the reader. His mysterious aspect is what keeps both Marlow and the reader motivated to continue. He is an intriguing character in that the only information that we currently have about him has come by word of mouth and rumor from other people that Marlow has met. The most interesting aspect of Kurtz is that he is described as having a nearly humane attitude towards the natives, and yet his station is set deep in the "heart of darkness" of the Congo.

Unlike the station manager we've met so far, Kurtz earned his position through hard work. Marlow finds this commendable and admirable because the station manager he has met received his job simply due to his strong immune system. The main focus of the plot is the idea of finally getting to meet Kurtz and the journey that will have to be taken to reach that goal. I believe that Kurtz symbolizes the epitome of the deception King Leopold used in the exploitation of the Congo. King Leopold put up this façade that he was using his control of the Congo for philanthropy and had the world blinded to the real horrors and exploitation of the Congo that he was actually creating. Just as King Leopold, I believe that Kurtz is being made out to be "the good guy" throughout the book but in the end he will end up being just as bad as all the others on the Congo or worse. What is even more ominous is that Kurtz's station is located in the "heart of darkness" which is the least likely place to find light and goodness which only reinforces my theory.

In addition to the aforementioned comments and portrays of the main characters in the novel what aspects in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can help to better apprehend the concept of Enigmatic behavior?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to understand and make understand the myth behind colonization in one hand, and the context of enigmatic behavior on the other hand. A lot of research has been done to show the unfathomable darkness within every human being for committing heinous acts of evils. Several studies confirm that the behaviors, thoughts and actions such as those of Kurtz are recognized as being influenced by loss of restraint and its psychological and emotional effects are destructive.

However, to grasp very well the aggressive behavior and the influential factors of Kurtz's transformation, I'll have to investigate thoroughly (for the continuation of this project in the major part of my thesis) the works of the Scholars that championed the theory of behaviorism and scrutinize the works of K. Abrahams, E. Jones, A. Freud and M. Klein since the creation of the International Psychoanalytical Association [IPA] in 1910 for the treatment approaches of the psychological and emotional effects of loss of restraint.

1.4. Significance of the study

This study is important because it enlightens one of the aspects of the novel that makes the reader be quite intrigued by Kurtz's character. When reading, he cannot wait to meet him. His station is supposedly in the "heart of darkness." Kurtz has been described as intellectual, which is what white men are supposed to be to the natives, but since Kurtz is the pinnacle of what a white man is supposed to be he will end up being the darkest characters of this book. Since he is manager in the "heart of darkness," one has to worry how he got there. Before Marlow entered the Congo mostly everyone warned him that he would not come out and that is true with most men like Marlow's predecessor who got in a scuffle with the natives, but Kurtz is still at the top, being at the top can mean that person has to be extremely dark.

Identifying and analyzing the Enigmatic behavior in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, is important to better understand the novel and what led its author to portray its characters this way.

The study can help to make a different critic of the novel and compare it to the previous ones such as Achebe's in order to bring a scientific light on what have been done so far about the study of this great novel.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the study

The study has some important limitations that can affect its fullness. It is limited by the role and the behavior of one of the main characters of the novel: Kurtz. It is only based on the fact that Kurtz is an intriguing character in that the only information that we currently have about him has come by word of mouth and rumor from other people that Marlow has met. The most interesting aspect of Kurtz is that he is described as having a nearly humane attitude towards the natives, and yet his station is set deep in the "heart of darkness" of the Congo. This could mean one of two things: that Kurtz will have been changed by the illness that he is rumored to have into a horrifying example of the cruelty of European exploitation, or he will be the lone bright spark of humanity in the depths of human greed. The whole dichotomy of the whole situation above set is really enigmatic. Kurtz, so far in the novel, has definitely been this mysterious character who has been the topic of many other Europeans. However, these conversations do represent Kurtz in a bad light; the people who talk about Kurtz are jealous of Kurtz's success in the Congo, while they're stuck in their positions. In a way, Kurt represents a mystery of the "civilized" because he is successful in the Congo while also a failure due to his health. He represents the Heart of Darkness. As Marlow continues his journey towards Kurtz, he travels towards heart of darkness.

The present study is based on previous literature review, critics such as Achebe's as well as those of E.M. Forster, Rudyard Keplin, Behaviorist's

theories and personal statement. Thus cautions should be taken regarding its scope in generalizing it to other works and contexts.

1.6. Methodology and Overview of the Upcoming Chapters

My research work aims at studying the different attitudes of tragic characters and analyzing their psychological, emotional, and destructive effects. To achieve this objective, I have thought it is important to expand my knowledge by:

- Reading novels, articles, magazines, and journals dealing with tragic events especially those of Chinua Achebe with the question of modern African tragedy as well as those of E. M. Forster and Rudyard Kiplin (for the critical literature review of the topic I explore.)
- Reading more about Psychology and Theories about Behaviorism: *The Stream of Consciousness*¹ for example illuminates and highlights my understanding about the history of Psychology.
- Listening several times to the song “3 AM”² by Eminem because it deals with the theme of a descent into evil and madness. It’s about a slow descent into homicidal madness, so it is connected thematically to the novel *Heart of Darkness* and the lyrics were very useful for me.
- Getting real historical facts about Colonialism and Imperialism³ (all about the history behind the Congo and its colonization by the Belgians). To get a full grasp about the colonization of the Congo by the Belgians, the period Joseph Conrad witnessed, I watched a movie entitled: “White King, Red Rubber, and Black Death”⁴. Another useful movie I watched is “Apocalypse Now”⁵ which

¹ William, James, 1892. “The Stream of Consciousness”, First published in Psychology, chapter xi. (Cleveland & New York. World).

² Eminem. “3 AM” Lyrics, Music, 2008. Warner-tamerlane publishing Corp., W B Music Corp.

³ Larned, J. N. The Congo. History for Ready Reference: From the Best Historians, Biographers, and Specialists, Volume vii- Recent History 1901-1910. A to Z – The C. A. Nichols Co.. Springfield, Mass., 1910.

⁴ White King, Red Rubber, Black Death, TV Movie 2003. DVD/ VHS. Directed by Peter Bate ArtMattan. With Elie Lisbon, Roger May, Steve Driesen, Tshilombo Imhotep.

⁵ Apocalypse Now. DVD. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Hollywood, Calif: Paramount, 1999.

was based on the novel *Heart of Darkness* as a great supplement to the teaching of the book.

To some extent, to complete this study, I apply the historical method based on documentation and my literary analysis presents the similarities existing in the change of attitudes of the tragic characters in the different novels I read. The transformation of the true nature of human beings is based on conditioning and its psychological and emotional effects lead to a tragic end as the loss of restraint develops the following features in every human being: **feelings of humiliation, loss of hope, and internal motivation, loss of dignity, diminished quality of life, confusion, fear, depression, withdrawal, isolation, desolation, anger, frustration, demoralization, increased agitation, hostility and aggression.**

In alignment with my interest in studying the factors affecting the true nature of human beings, this study will contribute to the research in tragedy because it's based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the theory of behaviorism and the influential factors of transformation of human beings that lead to commit heinous acts of evil.

In view of the nature of the topic under study, the transformation of the characters involved is related to the myth behind colonization. A research study that stands as a historical research dealing with events in the past natural setting is a systematic process of describing, analyzing and interpreting the past based on information from selected sources as they relate to the topic under study. Its value provides basis for understanding the past and perspective for decision making and policy formation. It also shows context for understanding why things are as they are and gives information to avoid repeating previous bad governance in politics, leading some African countries to political instability. It assists in identifying past trends and applying these to current trends in order to be able to predict the future.

The aforementioned methodology led me to structure this study in the following way:

- **Chapter Two** deals with the literature review of the topic undertaken and clarification of concepts. It presents my personal stand on the critics and analysis of the studies of the scholars who have championed the cause of the topic I explore and paved the way to make the scope of my research work less complex.
 - **Chapter Three** deals with Joseph Conrad's implications about the novel *Heart of Darkness* and how he perceives "enigmatic behavior" through his characters. It provides the literary background to the writer for comprehension activity, and shows a scheme of the plot of the novel and contextual factors that were likely to affect the true nature of human beings discussed in this study.
 - **Chapter Four** presents the extent and limit of Joseph Conrad's perception about the effects of Colonialism and Imperialism. It also provides summary of significant differences about the Western interventions in Africa.
- Finally, I comment on the implications of this study for the type of future research that could be fruitful in helping students engage in the topic I explore.

**Chapter Two:
Literature Review and Clarification of Concepts**

This part of my research work explains the literary period of the study which was Victorianism and Modernism, the related historical events which were imperialism and colonization, and the related literary works of the writer known as colonial and post-colonial literature.

2.1. Literature Review

The topic under study deals with behavior and its psychological effects on human beings. Advocated by famous psychologists such as John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner, behavioral theories dominated psychology during the early half of twentieth century. Behavioral psychology, also known as behaviorism, is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Much of what we know about human thought and behavior has emerged thanks to various psychology theories. And behavioral theories demonstrated how conditioning can be used to learn new information and behaviors, as Joseph Conrad illustrates it through Kurtz, the enigmatic character in *Heart of Darkness*, who is corrupted physically, morally, and mentally by the jungle, the tangling undergrowth of evil desires that seized control of his soul. *Heart of Darkness* can be regarded as a post-colonialist, post-modern text dealing with the psychological and physical transformation of the Europeans and the quest of an individual for self-knowledge in the heart of Africa, the Dark Continent. The lack of understanding the changes of attitudes of people and its impacts in the society which is to some extent the topic I explore has been thoroughly studied by many Scholars through their different theories. Behaviorism was once a dominant force and Scholars like Watson and Skinner left a major mark on psychology. What exactly is behaviorism and how does it work?

John B. Watson is often considered the father of behaviorism. His opinion about it is that behaviors can be measured, trained and changed. He defined

behaviorism as the concept of behavioral psychology which is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. And conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment. According to Behaviorists: “Our responses to environmental stimuli shape our behaviors.” I do agree with that assertion since it confirms my observations after all I read and understood about Behaviorism. Indeed, the different changes of attitudes observed occur as responses to environmental stimuli, and the enigmatic behavior referring to in *Heart of Darkness* is to some extent the aggressive change of attitudes that leads the characters involved towards savagery and finally to a tragically end. The case of Kurtz is an illustrative one, for, he is a man of great intellect, talent, and ambition that is warped by his time in the Congo. He is actually the embodiment of that’s noble about European civilization, from his talent in the arts to his ambitious goals of “civilizing” and helping the natives of Africa. He can be seen as a symbol of that civilization. But in his time in Africa, Kurtz is transformed from a man of moral principles to a monster that makes himself a god among the natives. His transformation proves that for all of his talent, ambition, and moral ideas, he was hollow at the core and he ended by crying and shouting “horrors.....horrors”, his last word after he realized his evils on the natives.

There are a number of important theorists and psychologists, who left an indelible mark on behaviorism, including: Ivan Pavlov who began studying the salivary response and reflexes in 1906, John Watson’s *Psychology as a Behaviorist Views It* was published in 1913 and the article outlined the main points of behaviorism; B.F. Skinner published in 1948 *Walden II* in which he described a utopian society founded upon behaviorist principles; Clark Hull’s *Principles of Behavior* was published in 1943 just to mention a few among the Scholars who championed the cause and paved the path to Behaviorism.

Many critics argue that behaviorism is a one-dimensional approach to understand human behavior and those behavioral theories do not account for

free will and internal influences such as moods, thoughts and feelings originated from the dominant ideology of the colonial era.

Terry Eagleton believes that *Heart of Darkness* embodies many of the same ideological contradictions that Conrad himself was subject to, namely an over determined conflict between “Romantic individualism and social organicism” (Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology*, London: NLB, 1976. P.133), that is derived from Conrad’s self-imposed exile from Poland. This embodiment can be seen in the tension between the motif of the ship as an organic community and the officer as isolated within it, thus forced to confront his own identity, tensions which affected Conrad and could be detected in his fiction. Marlow would then embody these contradictions in *Heart of Darkness*; he symbolizes the clash between the idealist ideology which sees itself as ‘civilizing Africa’ and the real material practices that were far from complicit with these ideals.

Heart of Darkness was published at the height of the European ‘scramble for Africa’ and was seen at the time as a critique of imperialism’s “robbery with violence”. The legitimating that springs from the ideology that makes imperialism possible – primarily, individualism and the bourgeois ethic, and the self-expanding nature of capital. According to Eagleton, these contradictions, which remain largely unresolved, are perhaps one main source of the “inconclusive” nature of the novel and apparently one of the aspects of the study undertaken: enigmatic behavior, as Marlow describes the black Africans in terms largely supplied by the dominant ideology of the times, seeing them as prehistoric “they still belonged to the beginnings of time – had no inherited experience to teach them” , repeatedly using the word “savage”, etc. – in short, as the Other to white man. Many critics consider this perception of black Africans as racist , however, the Other is the result of a binary opposition (us/them), an ideological construction; by defining the non-Western cultures as less than human the imperialist ideology implicitly defines itself, thereby legitimating its own values and the exploits that follow. Thus Marlow cannot

help but see predominantly through Western eyes and this justifies how Conrad's thinking reflects the dominant consciousness of the times, a consciousness radically affected by Darwinism and revealing itself in Conrad's application of social Darwinism, constructing the black Africans as lower down on the evolutionary scale than supposedly "civilized" Europeans.

The signification of the black Africans, then, as a lower form of life, as savage, uncivilized and unredeemed, is an effect of the dominant ideology of the times, and to a lesser extent this construction of non-western cultures still continues today, for similar self-legitimizing purposes.

So throughout the book we have Marlow "making sense of" his situation, and the sense he does make is necessarily contradictory, since the reality he directly experiences clashes with the dominant ideological representations of it. He asserts, for example, that the natives "were not inhuman" and yet "that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman". Conrad can hardly be accused of reproducing the imperialist ideology (and certainly this was not his intention) because some illustrative ideas and arguments can be found in the literary work of Edward Said and Chinua Achebe alongside their opposition in the discussion of whether the Colonial adventurism was brought on by racism suggested by Achebe or if it was a counteracting racism.

Indeed, in the England of the 1890's Edward Said's vision of colonial discourse was well known and his claim was that in the colonial era all Western representation of non-Western people are of necessity bothering and interiorizing. At the same time, there were voices protesting in a manner very close to Conrad's but as a matter of fact the cogency of Edward Said's and Chinua Achebe's arguments were deeply meaningful considering what Africans said to be: the Africans are figures of "intense blackness," "monstrous," "fiend-like". Their leader, a "black figure [...] on long black legs, [with] long black arms" is an "it" not a "he".

According to Achebe *Heart of Darkness* is “a story in which the very humanity of black people is called into question”. He seemed to have the feeling that the novel makes what is perhaps its most audacious assault of Western assumptions of righteousness and superiority. Indeed, fiction is still historical even if it is not based on actual events, for it always derives from the author’s experience. It is one of the textual forms that provides access to history as lived experience. It is what Joseph Conrad uses to recall his experience in the Congo. Through *Heart of Darkness*, he enlightens the reader and sheds light on how the situation in Africa was in the colonial era. However, Conrad’s main purpose in *Heart of Darkness* is to convey a vision of Africa rather than to give a description of its geography or socioeconomic state. In reading the novel, we are not searching for what the real Africa looked like, but we want to know how Conrad envisioned Africa as he imaged it to the readers. He made up some symbols to link to the real world, especially when he made Kurtz see social, economic and psychological problems through his character.

On the other hand, Joseph Conrad and Sigmund Freud were contemporaries; at the time Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* (1898), Sigmund Freud was beginning his work on the theory of behaviorism, the ego and the super-ego. Obviously, the trend of this period explains the link existing between the factors contributing to the transformation of the true nature of human beings and its psychological and emotional effects that result in what Conrad illustrates as lack of restraint. So, if we look at *Heart of Darkness* and apply Freud’s notion of the human psyche, we can consider Marlow’s journey as a psychological journey to know about how a civilized man can change to savagery when there is no restriction. Because Marlow reflects the ‘ego’, the more rational side and Kurtz represents the ‘id’ that is the man’s primitive force. Kurtz is Marlow’s ‘alter ego’. By viewing Freudian’s tripartite model of the mind as being in Kurtz’s psyche, we can grasp the importance of the topic I explore and conclude that the

'id' of a person is separated from is 'ego' and 'superego' in the African jungle as Marshall W. Alcom notes:

Like Freud, Conrad felt that the self should grow by virtue of the pressure and conflicts imposed on it by external reality. Its functions of self-regulation and reality perception should become more complex and coordinated through increased exposure to reality of principle. Like Freud, Conrad believed that exposure to reality should stretch the ego's capacity to understand the reality. (Alcom, Marshall W. "Narcissim and Literary Libido", New York: University Press, 1997).

2.2. Clarification of concepts

Two major concepts related to enigmatic behavior need to be clarified in this study: they are the concept of psychoanalysis in terms of the Freudian notions applied to the effects of the transformation of the true nature of human beings and the concept of racism and realism in British literature. The relationships of these concepts to the topic I explore are the subject matters to be analyzed.

2.2.1. Concept of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is the name given by Sigmund Freud to a system of interpretation and the therapeutic treatment of psychological disorder. Through his multiple case studies, Freud managed to find convincing evidence that most of our actions are motivated by psychological forces over which we have very limited control. Therefore, a psychoanalytic reading of *Heart of Darkness* might focus on the complicated psyches of Mr. Kurtz or Marlow and explore their unique psychological motivations and the ways in which their encounters with and within the Congo shift their psychological perspectives. Freud's notion of the Psychic apparatus and the three elements namely the id, the ego and the superego has served as key tools of my analysis to tell about the reasons that have led to the brutal, megalomaniac and enigmatic behavior of Kurtz in Africa.

They have been used to describe and account for his transformation from a good man in Europe to a greedy imperialist and agent of evil on the Dark Continent.

The central issue has consisted of understanding why Kurtz's mind has worked as it does? And the main conclusion has been that the savage of Kurtz, which in Europe has been kept under control by strict moral norms, has bubbled to surface in Africa.

The aim consists in exploring Kurtz's psyche as it is depicted in Marlow's narrative. Through my analysis drawing on Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, I intend to highlight the opposing facets of human nature as they are conveyed in Marlow's depiction of Kurtz. I am particularly interested in uncovering the secret of Kurtz's strange behavior and misconduct in Africa. This perspective best suits the aim of my study which is centrally concerned with shedding light on Kurtz's darkest side. Conrad's protagonist's actions and reactions as reflected in Marlow's narrative take various forms depending on interests as well as social, political and geographical contexts. Whatever the theoretical questions from which Kurtz's actions and reactions are examined, the main question the reader wants to understand is: why does Kurtz behave as he does? Since Sigmund Freud's ideas appeared after the publication of *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Conrad's literary work may be considered as having anticipated rather than being influenced by Freudian theories. Therefore, instead of showing the influence of Freudian theories on *Heart of Darkness*, my purpose is to read the book attentively by utilizing Freudian modes to explain and justify the topic I explore. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's pursuit of identity is consistent with the psychoanalytic theory that human identity is inside the psyche.

The novel is like a dream and Marlow's travel of self-discovery is like the author's and the reader's own journey. Marlow and Kurtz can be inferred as two diverse aspects of the self. Kurtz stands for the id (the desire to satisfy instinct) and Marlow stands for the ego (the human unconsciousness). Conrad and Freud were pioneers in stressing the irrational elements in human behavior, both

wanted to penetrate into “darkness”: the state wherein people are free to pursue their deepest desires, the “dark” side of nature in human behavior which tries to justify itself, only to surrender to explosive inner needs. Freudian theories give us a clear picture of the character of Kurtz to understand his enigmatic behavior from Europe to the Congo.

2.2.2. A psychoanalytic Approach to the Character of Kurtz

After my investigation on the character of Kurtz, I have reached the following understanding: in Europe where there are laws, religions, and values, Kurtz behaves in a normal way because he is conscious of his surroundings. His freedom is limited by social and moral norms and in this context it is easier for his ego to meditate between the id and the superego to achieve a balance. As Kurtz makes his way into the interior of “the Heart of Darkness” he begins to change. This transformation cannot be easily understood but can be attributed to his psyche or more notably to his id, ego and superego. Being away from his civilized society in Europe, Kurtz’s psyche degenerates because of the alien and primitive surroundings in which he lived in Africa. Under these new unfamiliar geographical and cultural conditions Kurtz’s superego loses control over his actions. And as there are no moral restrictions to set limits to his behavior he easily succumbs to the forces of darkness. As it is mentioned in the text, Kurtz’s psychological portrait is highly enigmatic. In Europe the protagonist is a great individual with many talents, whereas in Africa he turns into a greedy cruel man. In civilized Europe, Kurtz’s lusts and fantasies are repressed or kept under control, because of the strict supervision and moral restraints imposed on him by the society. But in colonial Africa where there are clearly not much moral restraints he feels that he has an absolute authority; he behaves as a tyrant that has the power to order and kill. His desire for power and wealth in Africa results in the id getting control over his ego which leads to his state of psychosis. His psychotic state allows him to follow corrupted ways and use criminal means to

accumulate wealth in Africa. For Kurtz, all means are justified to fulfill his ends. This includes enslaving, killing and mass extermination of the innocent natives. Generally, when an individual is cut off from a civilized society he tends gradually to become coarse, ill-behaved and antisocial. Kurtz is in many respects a vivid example of this: his savage nature which in Europe was kept under control by strict moral norms bubbles to the surface in Africa. Freud's opinion is as follows:

Civilization describes the whole sum of the achievements and regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes, namely, to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations.(Sigmund, Freud. Complete Psychological Works. Vol.19, pp.3-66, Vintage Classics, 1948.)

To clarify this transformation, it is important to notice that every human being according to Freudian theory mentioned above, has an id, ego and superego. These are the levels in the human psyche. The id is based on the pleasure principle, if the id had its way all people would only seek pleasure and self-gratification. From this, the ego and superego developed. The superego is an extension of the ego. The ego itself is the consciousness of the human being. It is based on the reality principle as well as being the representative of the real world. The superego is the idea of being conscious of the values and norms of a society. So, Kurtz loses the superego because he is no longer constrained by the norms of the European civilization, he has no longer superego to impose limits on his behavior, but also because of the madness of his soul:

Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror- of an intense and hopeless despair. (Conrad, 1992: 91)

This loss of superego leads to Kurtz's showing a lack of restraint in his dealings with the natives: "Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts".(Conrad, 1992: 91). This is the reason why he gives up his philanthropic ideal that consists of bringing light or civilization to the Dark Continent. Instead, he

sets himself up as a god to the natives at Inner Station. He manipulates the local natives to his interests, raids the country, plunders villagers and kill anyone who threatens his enterprise:

This lot of ivory now is really mine. The company did not pay for it. I collected it myself at a very great personal risk. I am afraid they will claim it as theirs though. H'm. It is a difficult case. What do you think I ought to do-resist? Eh? I want no more than justice. (Conrad, 1992: 106).

Tracing his behavior from Europe to Africa we can consider Kurtz as a complex character with a double personality. He is at once good and evil. He comes to Africa animated with the ideal of bringing civilization to the natives however, in this alien, hostile environment Kurtz fails to live up to this ideal because his id is the only driving force behind his actions.

In the light of the topic I explore, it is clear that Conrad's attitude towards imperialism is double-edged. On the one hand, he is in some ways pro-imperialist in the sense that he does not completely reject the imperial ideology. On the other hand, he is against the abuses of imperialism. Ambiguity and complexity were the techniques used intensively by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*; his ambivalence can be attributed to different factors. Some of these factors are related to his private life, others to the imperialist culture in which he lived. His ambiguous attitude may be above all, the enigmatic behavior shown by his characters throughout the novel. In my attempt to offer a Freudian interpretation of Kurtz's enigmatic behavior in *Heart of Darkness*, I can deduce that the protagonist changes from a European civilized being capable of striking a balance between the urges of the id and the constraints of the superego into an evil man in the heart of Africa. Through Kurtz's duality which is dramatized by Conrad, we may conclude that a man can change his behavior according to his geographical and societal surroundings despite the different forms of oppressive beliefs such as racism.

2.2.3. Concept of Racism

This section of my study tends to analyze the origin of racism and justifies the opinion of those who disagree with the great late writer Chinua Achebe who happens to find the novel racist.

Indeed, it was when European colonizers whose aim was mainly to seek out valuable primary products such as sugar, tin, rubber and the like, came into contact with “native” populations who were “people of color” that racism became a dominant force in Western society. In order to maintain hegemonic control of these populations, they were defined as inferior human beings primarily because of their different cultural practices as well as their not being White, the desired and “normal” European color.

Pushing such people to the margins did not, however, stop European men from sexually mixing with local women producing, wherever colonialism prospered, a so-called “mixed” race of people. Thus race, the biological descriptor was constructed in racism and became a major factor in discriminating between people. Colonial ideology was rapidly disseminated namely from Europe to Africa, spreading the doctrines of alleged racial inferiority. So, to some extent, the origin of racism can be understood as the relationship to capitalist expansion and European colonialism and also the meeting of people other than Europeans. While it is not necessary to dwell in detail on these historical factors, it is critically important to consider that it was primarily in these earlier centuries that the construction of “difference” became an issue that is prominent in the literature on post-colonialism. It is what Joseph Conrad fictionalizes in *Heart of Darkness*. For many of Conrad contemporaries, especially those of his opinion about the effects of colonialism, racism is best understood by theorizing about “difference” and “othering”. In fact, the construction of “difference” and the “process of assigning value to difference” are central to the understanding not of racism, but many other forms of oppressive beliefs. Therefore, racism can be defined simply as any policy, belief, and attitude, action, which subordinates

individuals or groups based on their race. What this definition leaves out, however, is the specific historical formation of racism as an institution and an ideology over the last several hundred years. Taking into consideration the social and historical perspective, Paula Rothenberg offers this more pointed and useful definition of racism:

Racism involves the subordination of people of color by White people. While individual persons of color may well discriminate against a White person or another person of color because of their race, this does not qualify as racism according to our definition that person of color cannot depend upon all the institutions of society to enforce or extend his or her personal dislike. Nor can he or she call upon the force of history to reflect and enforce that prejudice... History provides us with a long record of White people holding and using power and privilege over people of color to subordinate them, not the reverse.

The process of othering is also a denial of history; it presents a barrier to change and can be understood as a myth. Marginalizing others places them out of bounds of mainstream history; it culturally, intellectually and morally affects them and robs millions of people of their identities and their very personhood. Thus, one of the most critical components of modern or new racism is that is based on ideology construction of difference and othering. In combination with prevailing dominant white hegemonic power, racism becomes a commanding strategy for maintaining asymmetrical power relations. *Heart of Darkness* was conceived and written in this context and Joseph Conrad even witnessed the colonial evils in the Congo. However, his literary work has sparked debate among scholars of literature whether it is indeed a text that is racist. Even the great late African writer Chinua Achebe was sucked into this debate and his opinion on the issue is well known and very controversial. Those who disagree with him put across a series of arguments that revert back to the ideological environment under which the novel was conceived and written. Their argument is that the writing of *Heart of Darkness* was done at the time when considering Africans as savage as it is described by Joseph Conrad in the novel as lesser

beings than non-Africans was the norm. They point out that Conrad set his story in the Belgian (King Leopold II's) Congo of the 1890s when the Africans in the Congo region were being forced to extract ivory and rubber for the Empire at gunpoint. Those who resisted got killed or dismembered and to imagine a kind of discourse that saw blacks as having equal humanity with other races was unthinkable. They even think that Conrad attacks imperialism because he identifies it with clear plunder and not the pretensions of civilizing the savage and spreading Christianity.

Reading *Heart of Darkness*, we are certain that for the western readers of the 1890s, it must have shown the extremities of conquest, of course, but, it definitely must have confirmed the western concept of Africa as the land of savages. If the novel caused sympathy towards the African, it was that sympathy one has for an animal in agony, not fellow human beings.

2.2.3.1. Racism in British literature

The British literature gave too much importance to racism and colonialism of Britain and other European powers .So British literature is just an example in which writers tried to use the concept of racism that was seen as the classification of human beings into groups according to their religion, race, and civilization.

Some views believed that writers of the British history did not write in the same way because they argued that some writers tried to hide the real goals of imperialism, but others tried to show the real goals of imperialism and the evils of colonialism as it is said by Jonah Raskin:

His second ripped under the imperial house of modern fiction: Rudyard Kipling's monument to the empire. Kipling's walls hide the truth of imperialism .Conrad broke them down. ⁶

English writers tried to expose the relation between the colonizer and the colonized in a colonial context such as novels or poems and they tried to

⁶ Raskin, Jonah. *The Mythology of Imperialism*. New York: Monthly review press, 1971. P.30

examine and depict the British or other European powers abroad .They gave too much importance to the British expansion, which tried to establish its large political empire in Africa and Asia that was called the new imperialism. The English writers tried to depict the English man in Africa but also in Asia.

English man went to Africa or Asia in order to establish himself as a strong power also in order to rule and punish millions of black and brown people in these two continents.

The concept of new imperialism, which was caused by the British competition for trade and power led to the appearance of new racist ideologies which were depicted in many English poems and novels. Racism was clear in many works of British literature because English writers gave too much importance to British superiority, because they believed that whites were superior to non-whites and had the burden and responsibility of bringing the blessings of their superior civilization to the black or brown races.

British literature portrayed the world of colonialism and imperialism of the British Empire during the 19th century and it battled with other European nations for wealth and power because many European countries competed with each other to colonize as much of Africa and Asia as possible. Most British works focused on the evils of colonialism and paid more attention to its damages on both sides which means on the white colonizer's souls and on the life of black or colored natives in Africa or Asia.

In addition, most novels revealed the hypocrisy of the colonial efforts because British imperialism was justified by lies and pretexts which suggested that colonialism was not for bringing wealth to Britain but it was also for civilizing and educating the non-white races.

So, British literature during the 19th century focused more on racism and racial discrimination and paid more attention to the traditional justifications which were used as a tool by the British Empire in order to dominate everything in India or in South Africa .Some British works represented fear, terror and

darkness because it depicted the power of the British Empire and the suffering and misery of weak nations who were under the British control. Many British writers and through their works tried to depict or send the message of non-white's mistreatment because the reader was able to understand how British and colored races were treated differently.

In addition, novels or poems of English writers were often based on their experience in Asia or Africa and E.M Forster's *A Passage to India* is the best example when India was a colonial possession of Britain. In the novel the concept of racialism which is the separation between two races and it is a negative attitude towards minorities or towards people, who are different from each other, was clear and it was practiced by the British who tried to dominate everything in India.

There was a struggle between the British and the Indians in India because the British considered themselves superior to other races. In addition, E.M Forster tried to depict racism and oppression of Britain that ruled India. Also the British invaded India under the pretext of civilization because they believed that they had the burden to civilize and educate the Indians who were considered as backward people and they obliged the Indians to behave or even speak as the British . There was a struggle between two different cultures but the British tried to spread their values and their culture.

So, racism in E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India* was clear because the British used racist ideologies and power to make India a miserable place in order to achieve what they called the goals of British colonial imperialism. E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India* depicted colonization, which denied any chance of friendship between the English and the Indians.

E.M.Forster depicted the cultural clash that existed between the west which was represented by the British and the East which was represented by the Indians because the colonial situation made friendship or the co-existence between the English and the Indians impossible. So, through E.M Forester's description,

readers were able to understand the real aims of British racism in India during the 19th century and to have an idea about its use of power and missions of civilization in order to steal wealth and raw materials.

So, most English writers described what they have seen in Africa and Asia according to their experiences in order to depict the world of imperialism and colonialism during the 19th century and the clash which was between whites and nonwhites as it is thoroughly depicted by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* through his characters.

Racism is also clear in many British works, which support white colonialism. Rudyard Kipling's *The white man's burdens* is the best example of racial discrimination. Kipling's goal was to encourage the American government over the Philippines, his poem reflects the subject of American colonialism .It suggests and encourages the white man to colonize and rule other nations for the benefit of those people. Kipling's *white man's burden* argued that white people have an obligation to rule and civilize other people, which encourages racism and racial discrimination between people in the world.

2.2.3.2. Joseph Conrad between Racism and Realism

This section of my study deals with the controversial statement of the great late African writer Chinua Achebe and the general opinion of those who agree with him; on the other hand it presents what realism is in literature.

Heart of Darkness is Joseph Conrad's experience in Congo River and he describes his trip in a form of novel, which was recounted by Marlow. Many critics had classified Joseph Conrad as a racist and others had classified him as a realist .Many readers believe that Joseph Conrad in his novel *Heart of Darkness* was more racist rather than realist and they believe that he gave too much importance to the black people's shapes and behaviors as an ugly people rather than criticizing the imperialist behaviors against the Africans.

Other critics believe that Joseph Conrad in his novel *Heart of Darkness* was more realist rather than racist. They believe that Joseph Conrad was against the white colonizer's behaviors against the native Africans who were considered as victims of colonialism and colonizers ambition for power, wealth and money. Many authors have dealt with criticism on Joseph Conrad and his famous novel *Heart of Darkness*. Among the best critical studies I read including Ian Watt's Chapter in *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (1979) that gives me a clearer overview of the story's origins, aesthetic, and political concerns, Norman Sherry's *Conrad's Western World* (1971) provides me with a wealth of details on the historical background. Moreover, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" written by the late African writer Chinua Achebe, particularly retains my attention due to the controversy provoked by the issue of racism raised by its author; and I wonder if "racism" really figures heavily in *Heart of Darkness*. Did he use the word "racist" against Joseph Conrad? Those who agree with Achebe insist on the point that: in the nineteenth century where adventure novels are heavily loaded with the author's experiences as in *Heart of Darkness*, the authors tended to agree to be associated with their major characters. Conrad, who tended, throughout his life, to see the multiple conflicting dimensions of one thing, would definitely not want to disassociate himself from Marlow, who undertakes the same journey as his creator. But before going further in my analysis, it's worth paying a tribute to the first African writer to win broad critical acclaim in Europe and America. Indeed, Albert Chinualumogu Achebe was born into an Ibo family on November 16, 1930 in Eastern Nigeria and he died at age of 82 in Boston, USA on March 22, 2013. The most widely read African novelist, Chinua Achebe has shaped the world's understanding of Africa and its literature. He was the first Nigerian writer to successfully transmute the conventions of the novel, a European art form, into African Literature. Famous of his novels describe the effects of Western customs and values on traditional African society. Achebe's satire and

his keen ear for spoken language have made him one of the most highly esteemed African writers in English. Achebe's philosophy was the following:

I would be quite satisfied.....if my novels did no more than teach my [African] readers that their past- with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. (Achebe, Chinua. "Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*").

In addition, he believes that Joseph Conrad's description made the African continent, a place of horror and devils that is why he started his description by saying to his fellows: "I don't want to bother you with what happened to me"⁷

At the beginning of the novel, Chinua Achebe believes that Joseph Conrad describes the Thames River as a place of tranquility, where he depicted Europeans who sat there. However, Joseph Conrad's description of the Congo River was uglier because he considers it as the beginning of horror and darkness and travelling on that river was like going back in time which means that Joseph Conrad considers Africa as a backward continent by contrasting it to Europe as it is mentioned in the novel: "going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginning of the world ..."⁸

So, for Chinua Achebe the two rivers: the Thames, and Congo River were represented differently; the Thames river represents modernity and civilization while the Congo River represents darkness and devil.

Moreover, Chinua Achebe believes that the beginning of the novel on which Joseph Conrad tries to remind readers that Britain is a place of modernity, and civilization was one day a place of darkness because of the Romans exploitation. But, Chinua Achebe suggests that Britain was in the past a place of darkness, but now Britain becomes a country of light and modernity.

Chinua Achebe believes that Conrad was interested in African's institution because he gives too much importance to the behaviors and the shapes of the Africans also Joseph Conrad insists on the inferiority of the Africans who were

⁷ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P. 10

⁸ Ibid, 1994. P. 48

living in a dark continent without having any purpose, so he describes and expresses his personal thoughts which were considered as racist views.

Chinua Achebe believes that Joseph Conrad's use of words such as niggers, savages reflected racism because these words dehumanize the Africans and transform them from thinking people into animals or subjects, and these descriptions pushed Chinua Achebe to classify Joseph Conrad as a racist writer.

In addition, Chinua Achebe believes that Joseph Conrad's descriptions failed to achieve what he has called an anti-imperialist or an anti-colonialist work, because he did not give too much importance to these sides. Also, he believes that Joseph Conrad or Marlow was more racist than an anti-imperialist as many readers had classified him:

black shapes crouched ,lay set between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment and despair⁹

So, Chinua Achebe believes that Joseph Conrad dehumanizes the native Africans because of his use of words such as, black shapes rather than Africans; also his description means that Africans lived without any purpose or goal. Through the description of Joseph Conrad, Europeans became superior because of their pride with their civilization and their race, whereas the African race became inferior because of their civilization and their behaviors which were presented by Joseph Conrad in an ironic way.

Joseph Conrad's description made Africa a dark continent, a savage and mysterious place where there were savage and ugly people who had no civilization and the Africans need the European help in order to be human beings as it is mentioned in the novel: "The earth seemed unearthly"¹⁰

In addition, Joseph Conrad's description made the African ways of expressing themselves an ugly one, because he believes that Africans behaved in a

⁹ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P. 24

¹⁰ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P. 51

mysterious and strange: “They howled and leaped, and spun and made horrid faces”.¹¹

So, Joseph Conrad’s use of words such as howled, leaped ...dehumanizes the Africans. Some views said that Chinua Achebe read the novel from a modernist point of view because this views believe that Joseph Conrad depicts Africa of the 19th century and the words he uses such as savages, niggers were familiar at that time .However, Chinua Achebe argues that racism cannot be justified by time and he insists on the idea that Joseph Conrad was a racist rather than realist because he did not give too much importance to the greed and the evils of imperialism and colonialism.

In addition, Chinua Achebe believes that Joseph Conrad tries to relate everything bad and awful to the Africans especially when he describes their physical appearance:

in the evening three woman of whom one albino, passed our camp; horrid chalky white with pink blotches; red eyes; red hair; features very negroid and ugly.¹²

Besides his response to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, I found some common features in the literary fields of the two well-known authors: both writers wrote about post-colonial literature and in the novel *Arrow of God*, not only is the setting similar, Africa, the similarities of how the natives are seen and persecuted by the colonist present the same picture. Achebe and Conrad both use the word “savage” as a term to describe the native people, because this is how they were seen by their oppressors. Obviously, neither author believes these people to be savages, but throughout both pieces of literature the natives are degraded both verbally and physically. The natives are seen as expendable and therefore the quality of life given them is not as important. The goal pursued by the two writers though of different epoch is quite similar: to show how colonization perpetuates racism and destroys traditional culture by use of assimilation.

¹¹ Ibid, 1994. P. 51

¹² Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P. 65.

Therefore, one can say without mistaking that Achebe finds truth in Joseph Conrad's writing before he wrote his novel *Arrow of God*. It is important to note that Chinua Achebe, who develops a revulsion against this kind of writing, vows to write a literature that redeem the black image and rightfully, his novels; *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, portray Africans as real beings with strengths, weaknesses, philosophies and languages.

However, he famously denounced *Heart of Darkness*, arguing that in its depiction of Africa and Africans, Conrad was revealed as a "thoroughgoing racist", a "bloody racist", and that "there remains still in Conrad's attitude a residue of antipathy to black people which his peculiar psychology alone can explain."

Through Achebe's opinion about Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*, I think that Achebe was deeply concerned with the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which has been fostered for ages and continues to undergo the same plight. Moreover, he bitterly wonders if a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. Certainly Conrad's defenders could not stand aloof from the assertions mentioned above: one of the objective reactions which I believe is more convincing is the one of the Caribbean writer, Wilson Harris:

the attitude to the African.....is not Conrad's but that of his fictional narrator, Marlow, and that far from endorsing it Conrad might indeed be holding it up to irony and criticism.¹³

Therefore, the issue of racism raised by Chinua Achebe in *Heart of Darkness* should be perceived as the desire or need in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe.

In this line, Achebe thinks that Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in his novel. It was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination and Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his own

¹³ Harris, Wilson, *Exploitations: A Selection of Talks and Articles*, 1966-1981. Ed. By Hena Maes- Jelinek. Mundelstrup: Dangaroo Press, 1981. P. 96

mind to bear on it. So, he also believes that Joseph Conrad was a racist in his description because he had related the ugliness to black Africans who had red eyes which means that African women were awful and Joseph Conrad in his novel *Heart of Darkness* showed a kind of superiority, because he believes that the black race was a race of ugliness whereas the white race represented purity.

Many readers believe that there was a contradiction between the beginning of the novel because Joseph Conrad described Marlow's fellows and how they were sitting on a "deck of a cruising yawl" and the description of the black Africans. Marlow was not able to tell his fellows about his experience in the Congo River, he considers his journey as a nightmare, and also he believes that his fellows live in a world of modernity and civilization.

Many readers believe that Conrad did not respect the native Africans because of his representation which treats the Africans as a sub human on which Regelind Farn said:

Conrad's representation of the Congolese as "savages" without merit can inspire a real craving for historical facts .Because it depicts central Africa as being without a history and geographical unspecific.¹⁴

So, many readers believe that Joseph Conrad's work did not go deeper and deeper to the issues of imperialism and colonialism, but his work was interested in Africa and Africans who were badly described .In addition, Congolese in *Heart of Darkness* represent fear, despair while white characters represent hope, and power.

Many readers criticize Joseph Conrad's description of the Africans, when they were forced to do hard labor because they believe that his description denied the idea of equality between blacks and whites .These descriptions made the Africans more inferior and, reflected a sign of death and hopelessness while white master's descriptions reflected a sign of power that is also real in literature. Realism in literature is to depict or to portray life as it truly is by

¹⁴ Regelind, Farn. *Colonial and Post-colonial rewriting of Heart of Darkness*. Florida: Boca Raton, 2005. P.07

representing social or political environment in a realistic way. The 19th century was a period of colonialism, imperialism and racial discrimination, so many European writers tried to depict life at that time in a realistic way.

Many readers view Joseph Conrad as a realist and consider his experience as a depiction of what happened in the Congo and Africa in the 19th century. They believe that Joseph Conrad in his novel *Heart of Darkness* was realist and his description depended on words which were familiar during the 19th century. Through *Heart of Darkness* Joseph Conrad gives a real image about the hypocrisy of the entire colonial efforts and how Europeans tried to justify their presence in Africa by the pretext of civilization.

Joseph Conrad portrays European civilization as a corrupt one, which pushed many readers to believe that his novel was not for abusing the Congolese because of its attack on colonialism and imperialism in the Congo.

Some views believe that Joseph Conrad describes imperialism as a robbery of wealth and raw materials with the use of force and power and how the European nations were interested in money and trade without giving too much importance to their treatment of the Africans. In addition, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* attacks colonialism and depicts the aggressive attitudes towards the African victims of European imperialism and also condemned and accused their system, which forced the Africans to work as a machine and denied their right for possessing a land or getting an income.

In addition, what made Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* more realistic and Joseph Conrad as a realist writer is his condemnation of colonialism and his sympathy for the natives which reflected his sense of moral responsibility:

The man seemed young -almost a boy- But you know with them it's hard to tell. I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I had in my pocket¹⁵

¹⁵ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P.25

Heart of Darkness was only a presentation of African realities and the horrors of the political system in the 19th century by showing the real aims of civilizing missions of European imperialism. The novel gives too much importance to the evils of colonialism and its damages on the white colonizer's souls which made the Africans more pure and less corrupt but innocent, while the white colonizers were more corrupt and represented the world of darkness.

In addition, many readers believe that Joseph Conrad was against the white colonizer's attitudes and their system towards Congolese who suffered from diseases and starvation and showed a kind of compassion towards them:

They were dying slowly –it was clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, -nothing but black shadows of diseases and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom.¹⁶

Each part of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* represented the immorality of white colonizers who ill-treated the Africans and considered them as slaves. However, his description was for disgracing the imperialist attitudes and the horror of colonialism in Africa. In addition, Joseph Conrad uses strange words such: as niggers, savages which angered many readers because they believe that these words reflected racism and racial discrimination. But Joseph Conrad uses words which were familiar during the 19th century and because he was presenting real facts.

Some critics argue that, throughout Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the reader can distinguish between the concept of good and evil because colonizers believed that the white race was good and the dark race was evil. So the novel clarifies the idea of whiteness which was associated with imperialist, became wrong because of their ambition to power and wealth.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* puts a kind of light on everything that happened against the natives and during the 19th century under the imperialist powers and its role was to make people know the reality and the truth, and to

¹⁶ Ibid, 1994. P.24

accuse the colonial system in Africa which was misguided .Joseph Conrad suggested that the white man's presence in Africa transformed it into a dark continent.

In addition, colonial powers were white physically but morally black because they abandoned their morals because of power and wealth as Regelind Farn said:

It's also a story of colonies another important Contemporary genre, but Conrad whites are neither noble .Triumphant more pleasantly titillated by exotic surroundings .The contemporary stereotype of African darkness is partially reversed by suggesting that whites have their own darkness and bring it to Africa¹⁷

Africans in *Heart of Darkness* were better than Europeans who were corrupt. Joseph Conrad in his novel *Heart of Darkness* feels pity towards the native Africans and he is horrified to see them doing hard works and taking packages or being beaten by the white masters and going slowly towards their death and, led him to feel miserable .In *Heart of Darkness* Joseph Conrad appears alien or against the Western culture's ideas which tried to steal other nation's wealth under unbelievable pretexts especially Britain which tried to justify the colonial exploitation by a mission of civilization. For Marlow, white people who believed that they were superior beings and masters were just devils who misused their mission of civilizing and humanizing the Africans. They became a source of evil and violence:

“I have seen the devil of violence and the devil of greed and the devil of hot desire.”¹⁸

So, Marlow is against these masters because they were criminals and thieves and his description gives too much importance to the white imperialist's greed and violence rather to the inferiority of the Africans. In addition, he blames those white masters who ill- treated black Africans and he feels pity because of the white's systems of punishing and killing the natives.

Realism in *Heart of Darkness* is clear and readers cannot blame Joseph Conrad as a racist because he is just describing what he noticed in the Congo during the

¹⁷ Regelind, Farn. *Colonial and Post-colonial rewriting of Heart of Darkness*. Florida: Boca Raton, 2005. P.08

¹⁸ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P.23

19th century .Marlow shows a kind of compassion towards the natives and he considers them as his equals which means human beings not slaves or animals: “Yes, I looked at them as you would as any human being with curiosity of their impulses motives, capacities, weaknesses ...”¹⁹ .

So, the concept of inferior versus superior does not exist because all human beings are equal and they must share the same rights, so blacks or any race in the world cannot be treated according to the skin color. Marlow takes the case of the British imperialism in Africa as similar to the Romans. Marlow believes that England was one of the dark places of the earth and how London as a civilized and large city was a dark place .So; English during the Roman exploitation were in the same situation to Africans in the 19th century: “And this also, said Marlow suddenly has been one of the dark places of the earth”²⁰ .

So there was a kind of evil in the mission of civilization because this mission was misused because it was corrupted by people’s hot desire for wealth, land and money. In the novel Marlow is against Kurtz’s behaviors in Africa and his ill-treatment towards the Africans .Kurtz was sent to the Congo to educate and civilize the natives, he was sent for a moral mission and he was expected to be white morally and physically.

However, what may be considered to be light was dark in *Heart of Darkness* because Kurtz’s desire and ambition to get more ivory or wealth led him to become a source of evil and his goals of civilizing and helping the natives were lost. Joseph Conrad’s description of Kurtz leads the reader to understand the real goals of civilization in Africa and summarizes the British imperialism and colonialism into one character which is Kurtz and his attitudes towards the Africans reflects the evils of colonialism which were the basic factors of his transformation.

¹⁹ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*. London. Penguin Books, 1994. P.59,60

²⁰ Ibid, 1994. P.07

For Marlow or Joseph Conrad, his trip to the Congo was a journey of discovery because he discovers the truth of the Western culture and he starts to realize that civilization was a lie and for him light and whiteness became dark. In addition, Marlow's journey leads him to know the real aims of European imperialism, and he starts to believe that their presence in Africa was not for moral goals, it was not for humanizing or helping the Africans who were used as objects in their land, but their presence in Africa was negative towards the natives and positive towards the Europeans. The imperialist presence in Africa led the continent to humanizing and educating the natives in order to steal other nation's wealth and resources by force and whiteness reflected black natives who were considered as victims of the evils of colonialism .So, through *Heart of Darkness*, the reader can realize the true nature of human beings and can distinguish between the evil and the good or noble. spread its civilization and religion into the African continent and into the Africans.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was an anti-colonial work as many readers view it because they believe that the writer tries to accuse the European imperialism and colonialism in Africa .In his novel Joseph Conrad gives importance to the damages of white colonizer's souls, which became dark because of their greed to power and wealth.

In addition, Joseph Conrad believes that black Africans were noble Primitive and innocent, while white colonizers were criminals and thieves, so darkness reflected white colonizers who used the pretext of civilization and missions of

Chapter Three:
Joseph Conrad's perception of Enigmatic
behavior in *Heart of Darkness*

A person or a situation is enigmatic if it is puzzling and is difficult to understand. When a person is described as enigmatic, that simply means, they are showing one of the following qualities: hard to fathom, ambiguous, leaving people wondering, this is the sort of behavior Conrad's enigmatic characters undergo in *Heart of Darkness* that the readers always find mysterious.

3.1. Character Review

3.1.1. Marlow: The Main Character

The novel reflects Conrad's state of mind and his values. Conrad works on his own psychic and moral confusion. Charlie Marlow, the protagonist of *Heart of Darkness* is looking for Conrad's values and the presence of Conrad is undeniable in each event. Marlow who narrates four of Conrad's novels has been considered to be Conrad's alter-ego; an experienced and thoughtful captain with sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, and an ascetic who is honest, smart, rough, and sympathetic. He is described as a civilized man who always speaks in a gentle manner and a good example of a man of his time. As Marlow goes deeper into the heart of the jungle to search for this elusive figure (Kurtz), he starts to know that savagery is a primitive form of civilization. When he is wandering in the jungle, he comments:

I have seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire, but by all the stars! These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men - men, I tell you. But as I stood on the hillside, I fore saw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. How insidious he could be, too, I was only to find out several months later²¹.

It is important to note that Marlow's awareness of truth in terms of civilization changes: what he thought as rational and superior was irrational. When Marlow learned of Kurtz's activities in the jungle, he had justified Kurtz's moral

²¹ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 39

collapses because of his separation from civilization. Marlow was not treating the blacks in a cruel way and considered the pain of the native workers. During the journey through the jungle, Marlow is quiet. He has special feelings toward the world:

There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrest and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention.²²

The critic Guerard suggests that:

Heart of Darkness is not primarily about Kurtz or about the brutality of Belgian officials, but about its narrator: Marlow. To his listeners this narrator appears like a 'Buddha' without the lotus flower. This introduces a meditative frame that helps add to a simple tale of action an inquiry into its moral and philosophical implication.²³

Marlow and Kurtz deal with a conflict between their images of themselves, and the appeal of abandoning principles and morality when they try to leave European culture. They like to civilize African people. Marlow hates the cruel treatment of the natives that work for Kurtz. Marlow tries to get Kurtz out of the Congo River, but Kurtz dies. During Marlow's mission to find Kurtz, he is trying to find his true-self too. Marlow's journey can be interpreted as a descent into the unconscious. Conrad deals with moral conflicts of the human mind: conscious and unconscious. Marlow's journey into the Congo characterizes the human's hidden mind. The result of all the pains he had endured was the discovery of self-hood. When Marlow returned to Europe, he found people's behavior offensive. This could be the reason why in the opening page of his narration, Marlow speaks of England as one of the darkest places of the earth when Romans conquered it.

²² Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 60.

²³ Farn Regelin. "Colonial and Postcolonial of *Heart of Darkness*": A century of Dialogue with Joseph Conrad.

3.1.2. Kurtz's Character

Kurtz is a fictional character who stands as a major example of a civilized man, who yields to his barbaric nature because of the Congo's environment. The model for Kurtz was made by literary and sophisticated tradition, and the behavior of many Europeans in Africa. A man who exemplifies Western civilization: his mother half-English, his father half-French. All Europe contributes to make Kurtz. He is a man of talent who reads and writes poetry. Additionally he is on a mission and accumulates a report for the international society for the suppression of savage customs. He is a hollow man who becomes frenzied by his greed for ivory. This is the reason why he gives up willingly to his primitive instincts, gets involved in the dreadful rites of the natives, and let his dark essence become the core of his actions. Marlow's first physical description of Kurtz's as follows:

And the lofty frontal bone of Mr. Kurtz! They say the hair goes on growing sometimes, but this—ah—specimen was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball—an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and—lo!--he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation.²⁴

Kurtz is the chief of the Inner Station and the reason for Marlow's trip. He is a man of talents. He has the ability to lead men, and control the natives. He did whatever he wanted, because there were no laws to restrain him. He was struggling with the darkness in himself; but at the end before he dies, he was able to recognize and confess to it:

Kurtz has many facets an in Marlow's shifting presentation of him, but a major one is that of the specifically modern hero: diabolic in the concentration of his deviant will and his intellectual gaze, pursuing forbidden experience with the inverted dedication of a questing knight —at-arms, contemptuous of others and of himself, radical and unsatisfied, without outer convention of inner core, the lonely alien in our midst. He is

²⁴ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 81.

the subverting stranger, the man without qualities (in Musil's phrase), who overthrown all the impostures and seeming values of the world around him.²⁵

The company described him as the best agent, and an extraordinary man. He went to the jungle to get money for the company and himself, but he was changed when he became dominated by the evil within his soul:

Kurtz resembles the archetypal "evil genius": the highly gifted but ultimately degenerate individual whose fall is the stuff of legend. Kurtz is related to figures like Faustus, Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Moby-Dick's Ahab, and *Wuthering Heights*'s Heath cliff. Like these characters, he is significant both for his style and eloquence and for his grandiose, almost megalomaniacal scheming. In a world of mundanely malicious men and "flabby devils," attracting enough attention to be worthy of damnation is indeed something. Kurtz can be criticized in the same terms that *Heart of Darkness* is sometimes criticized: style entirely overrules substance, providing a justification for amorality and evil²⁶.

There are no restrictions to keep him conventional. Both Kurtz and Marlow must face the darkness within themselves, while Marlow leaves the darkness as early as he arrives. He takes lessons from Kurtz, and notices the corruption of his colleagues. Kurtz is a gifted man, writer, publicist, an artist and explorer. He had gone further than the conventions of his culture regarding prohibited knowledge. Conrad deals with the dark heart of humanity in this novel. He tells us that man has also an evil side that is masked by civilization.

3.1.3. African Kurtz

He is a man of talents. He has the capability to guide men, and control the natives. The company described him as the best agent, a professional man in his career, of great importance to the company:

This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to

²⁵ I.H Stape. *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)210.

²⁶ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 102.

embrace the whole universe piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. 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 candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth- the strange commingling of desire and hate.²⁷

The people assumed Kurtz to be a noble man. On the coast, the Company's Chief accountant notified Marlow that; "In the interior you will no doubt meet Mr. Kurtz a first class agent. He is a very remarkable person, at the very bottom of there. Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together" Kurtz's cousin claimed that Kurtz had been a great musician. "There was the making of an immense success". He represented many things: a symbol of the wilderness, a god-like being, an imperialist, and a representative of power to the natives. Kurtz lived with his power in the jungle for a long time. Kurtz was a bright man who could not adapt himself to the environment. His hut was surrounded by the skulls of men who had betrayed him, which served as a reminder to anyone in the jungle who contemplated going against his will. Once Kurtz considered the world is in a fixed way: birth, life, and finally death. In his quotes: "I am lying here in the dark waiting for death"²⁸.

Kurtz utilized severe violence in not only taking the ivory from the Africans, but also mistreating his fiancé and colleagues. Throughout his time in the Congo, he became very unsympathetic. His hut was decorated with skulls which showed his brutality and cruelty towards the natives. Finally, Kurtz's greed, curiosity and desire for the ivory were the main reasons why he came to Africa. The way he wanted to get ivory was the way imperialism demanded. The barbarity of his deeds, cruelty, and greed made him mentally ill and led to his failure and finally to his death. The colonial expansion resulted in extreme cruelty and left the native people in a ruined state. Six million Africans died during the trade, many of them were enforced to move cargos or help smuggling supplies into the

²⁷ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 113

²⁸ Ibid.115

jungle. These dilemmas helped the formation of Kurtz's personality.

3.2. A Psychological Reference

3.2.1. A Journey in Quest of Self

Although this story sounds frightening to readers of the twentieth century compared to Conrad's time, it has an exciting adventure atmosphere in the centre of an unexplored continent. The title of *Heart of Darkness* was a perfect headline for a magazine-serial, and the novel first appeared in Blackwood magazine. This is the most famous of Conrad's personal short novels, "before the Congo I was just a mere animal" Conrad stated. It is Conrad's longest journey into self, a recorded history of human conscience and geographical exploration. It seems obvious that the story is not about Kurtz or about the brutality of the Belgians, but it is about Marlow's journey into the unconscious, and confrontation of an entity with the self. The text is actually a description of a human's morality and psychological deterioration and intellectual journey to understand the essential self.

Kurtz has a symbolic role, and is a ghost in Marlow's nightmare. This is clear when Marlow mentions:

No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence -- that which makes its truth, its meaning -- its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream -- alone.²⁹

Up to this point, *Heart of Darkness* is an attempt to do the impossible; provide a meaning to a dream. The tale has a double fold message in this context: the first is Marlow's dream and the second is Marlow's journey to Africa. After three months, Marlow goes up river with the aim of relieving Kurtz at the inner station. His journey is both literal and symbolic:

Going up to that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were the kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, and sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long

²⁹ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 50.

stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbank hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side³⁰.

Marlow's journey to the Congo River is a discovery of self. His aim is acquiring self-knowledge, and understanding the mystery of existence; but Kurtz affects him. Kurtz's crucial role in the tale lies in his symbolic importance: in the signification of his history, in his role in the personification of darkness itself, and a potential image of Marlow's self-hood. This enigmatic man was acting like a God to the natives. Marlow encountered reality in two ways: the reality of ethics and the reality of darkness.

The story is like a dream as Marlow talks about his experiences. In the theme of the story, Conrad introduces the alertness from silence and stillness to noise:

...a cry, a very loud cry, as of infinite desolation, soared slowly in the opaque air. It ceased. A complaining clamour, modulated in savage discords, filled our ears. The sheer unexpectedness of it made my hair stir under my cap. I don't know how it struck the others: to me it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed, so suddenly, and apparently from all sides at once, did this tumultuous and mournful uproar arise³¹.

Finally, Marlow understands that the greatest adventure of his life is death. According to Conrad, every man has darkness in him/herself, but it is masked by civilization. The aim of the whole adventure that Marlow went through was searching for the meaning of a true self Marlow quotes this sentence when he encounters the nature of a man: "Dark human shapes could be made out in the distance, flitting indistinctly against the gloomy border of the forest."³²

3.2.2. Characters showing enigmatic behavior

In addition to Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, the analysis of the literary works related to the topic I explore, prove that the change of attitude that

³⁰ Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness with the Congo Diary*, 59

³¹ Ibid. 68

³² Ibid. 98.

shapes an individual true nature is his/her lack of control and its effects are very destructive. Consequently, evil, for white man and for black, according to Joseph Conrad, is lack of restraint, not apathy or passivity and not temptation itself, but the succumbing thereto. As a result, Marlow respects any man who can show self-control, and even shows control himself. His restraint saves him and keeps him from going mad, which is a complete contrast to Kurtz's absence of restraint and the events that befall him because of that.

Therefore, we need laws and restraints in our society because of our nature. Restraint is what holds oneself together; the capacity to suppress one's own action is the aptitude to control one's mind. According to Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, the factors influencing our true nature are: **power, greed and one's surroundings**. The whites are powered by their greed for ivory and Kurtz had been lost to savagery by his lack of restraint.

So, to be able to control one's self when these three factors are threatened is admirable because without the rules and checks of society behavior becomes vicious. Apart from Kurtz, the main enigmatic character, changes in attitude are also experienced by the Helmsman, the Harlequin Russian, the Accountant and the General Manager. Their role and significance will be defined below.

3.2.3. Events and facts illustrating enigmatic behavior

The helmsman: He was an African who helped Marlow navigate. When the boat comes under attack, he goes crazy on the deck and is killed by an arrow. The helmsman shows how the loss of restraint causes a person to become savage. During the attack on the ship, he lost all restraint and began acting on primal instinct, ultimately leading to his death.

Harlequin Russian: He is Kurtz's assistant and devoted follower at the inner station. The harlequin is the only one who is not at odds with the continent; who is free of the rapacity, the deadly greed of all the Europeans in the novel. He is more closely related to the African who is beaten half to death.

Additionally, the harlequin is the bridge over which information is carried from and about Kurtz. He was gone over the edge of restraint; he connects the Africans to Kurtz, the colonized to the colonizer, the oppressed to the oppressor, the brutalized to the brutal, the victimized to the victimizing tyrant, the black to the white as a whole. The Russian's actions also show that restraint keeps people from wild savagery.

Accountant: He lives at the Outer Station and is the company's main accountant. Joseph Conrad uses the accountant to show that with restraint a person is sensible and level-headed, even in difficult conditions. The accountant is restrained by his commitment to his appearance and his work.

General Manager: He runs the company and is not particularly talented. He makes people uneasy. The general manager shows how restraint keeps people from becoming savage. He outlasts Kurtz and everyone else in Africa by being patient and following all the rules.

3.2.4. Themes related to enigmatic behavior

The main themes related to the topic I explore are the following:

- Imposing one's form of civilization on another through imperialism is futile, causing more chaos than it is worth.
- Without some form of restraint, people tend to degenerate into savagery.

But to justify the above mentioned themes, it's necessary to provide the historical information behind the Congo and its colonization by the Belgians:

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was first known as the Congo Free State, and then as the Belgian Congo (from 1908-1960) even though the Congo was Belgian from 1885 until it gained independence in 1960. In 1884, the Congo became the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium until 1908, when Leopold gave the Congo to Belgium in exchange for a loan. During Leopold ownership of the Congo, the Congolese were "slaves in all but name". Brutality was rampant and the Belgians monopolized the ivory trade. Joseph

Conrad had dreamed of visiting Africa since he saw it on a map as a youngster (Conrad was always fascinated with map, as was his character Marlow.) But when he finally went in 1890, the Congo he encountered was definitely not what he had expected:

As a result of ruthless colonial exploitation, involuntary servitude and direct violence, the native people live in an impoverished state. Many Africans died during the brutal rubber trade overseen by the Belgians. Many are forced to be “carriers” because on jungle expeditions, they need to move cargo from one place to another. These packages they carry on their backs on rough footpaths through the jungle, weigh heavily and there are few if any breaks to stop and rest. It is a hard life but this history sets up the actions behind the fiction in this novel as far as helping to smuggle ivory out, or carry supplies into the jungle nation. Colonization destroys at the native people expense and evil is driving to the worst.

The Europeans believe that the natives are beneath them and in need of being cultured. The natives are lulled into a false sense of security and then become slaves of the European colonizers. To the Europeans, the natives are valuable, if they are productive and supplying ivory and other goods to the Europeans. To the Europeans it is imperative that they attain wealth power and prestige. They simply care about what works for them and the betterment of their positions.

Consequently, the brutality and savagery of colonialism cause the natives to fear the colonizers and the Europeans use this fear to their advantage to get what they want. Through the actions of the Europeans, the natives are made fearful and in order to protect their lives and the lives of their families, they submit to the will of the foreigners.

Colonialism, as I understand it through Conrad’s fiction, is a brutal and savage process that seeks to eliminate all dissenting beliefs; it’s simply a brutal competition for dominance and control in a foreign land where the only thing

that matters is getting to the top regardless of how many bodies have to be dumped by the wayside.

The case of Kurtz justifies the second theme that I mentioned above:

What makes a person commit brutal, evil acts such as the ones Kurtz commits as he “goes native” and descends madness? What drives people to madness? During the course of his inner journey, Marlow becomes aware of his “kinship with Kurtz” and, therefore, his own potential for evil, but he chooses not to act on it the same way Kurtz does; does this indicate that the potential for evil is part of human and if so, what leads some people to act on it and not others. Is the capacity for evil conditioned or absolute and is it present in all human beings? These are the sorts of questions that always came to my mind before I decided to carry out this research work.

Indeed, Kurtz is the most successful agent for the Dutch trading company; he becomes so entwined in his trade that he breaks the rules of his company and employs savage techniques to get ivory. He becomes very ill and before his death he tries to escape civilization and go into the jungle.

From this brief description of Kurtz, the main enigmatic character in the novel, it's obvious that he is critical to the meaning of the novel. His initial goals disappeared as he rose to be the top agent in the Belgian Congo. His change from an idealistic imperialist to an ivory-obsessed agent is used to show that the Europeans could not “civilize” Africa. After being isolated for too long, he had become a beast at his station. Kurtz that was a good man in Europe had lost all restraint, even ignoring the rules of his own company. He symbolizes a whole in miniature of the white man's failure in Africa. Culture and civilization of Europe is evident in Kurtz: orator, writer, poet, musician, artist, politician, ivory procurer. He is a universal genius, a hollow man without integrity or any sense of social responsibility. Kurtz shows us the consequence of inadequate, self-knowledge (journeys to Africa eager to do well completely unaware of the dark side of his nature: the side that will respond to the call of the primitive). Kurtz

recognizes the evil of his actions “the horror--the horror” (his dying words). Considering what Marlow says “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz”³³, and according to Tony Brown, the “hideous panorama” that Marlow sees when he begins to navigate the Congo “appears the direct result of the colonialists’ actions in the area”³⁴. So Marlow’s statement could be used to support an interpretation that Kurtz’s evil has been conditioned by his experiences, and that his madness is a reflection of the evils of colonization in the Congo, hence his awareness in his final moments of the atrocities and brutality that he has been a part of perpetuating. In a large sense, this implies that evil is not just represented by Kurtz, but also by the larger society that has pillaged the Congo, brutalized and demeaned the native population.

3.2.5. Figures of Speech demonstrating enigmatic behavior

In literature and writing, a figure of speech (also called stylistic device or rhetorical device) is the use of any of a variety of techniques to an auxiliary meaning, idea or feeling. Figurative language is often associated with Literature and the complexity of Joseph Conrad’s language in *Heart of Darkness* is often characterized by balanced phrases and parallel structures. He interprets his narrative with long, poetic descriptions of natural scenes.

The figures of speech Conrad used in *Heart of Darkness* include hyperbole, metaphor and simile. They seem to be the most striking tropes used at beginning to the end of the novel and its impacts are connected to the topic I explore. They prove to some extent what the readers always find mysterious.

Hyperbole is a figure of speech (a form of irony) in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect; an extravagant statement is used to show the writer’s strong feelings about something.

³³ Brown, Tony C. “Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Criticism edited by Ross Murfin, 350-366. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1989. P.73

³⁴ Ibid, 108

An example that demonstrates the style: *A few days later the General Manager's Uncle and his Eldorado Expedition head into the jungle. Marlow later heard that all their donkeys died, but never heard what happened to the 'less valuable animals' – the men. (P.29).*

It is obvious that the “less valuable animals” referring to are the natives, the primitives known as cannibals because of their nature. Marlow isn't just bitter; he really thinks the donkeys are more valuable. Donkeys work and aren't hollow, as opposed to the Eldorado men, the natives. The depiction of the cannibals as “less valuable animals” appears to be racist and condescending.

Metaphor is a trope or figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something in common.

An example that demonstrates the style: *Marlow, on the Nellie still at anchor in the Thames, goes quiet. The Narrator looks off into the distance, and says that the Thames seems to lead to the 'uttermost ends of the earth,' seems to lead "into the heart of an immense darkness.(P.56).*

Here, Conrad's metaphorical expressions are very deep and significant. Marlow's story, though, forces the Narrator to see civilization's dark heart. The Narrator's connection of that darkness to the Thames indicates he now realizes his former romantic ideas of colonialism were symptoms of civilization's self-delusion. This is the sort of behavior Conrad's enigmatic characters undergo in *Heart of Darkness* that the readers always find mysterious.

Simile is a comparison using the words “as”, “than”, or “like”.

An example that demonstrates the style: *The trip is long and difficult. Marlow describes the jungle as a 'thing monstrous and free' and the natives as beings 'who howled and leapt and made horrid faces.' Yet Marlow feels some connection to the 'terrible frankness' of the natives, knowing that he has some of the primitiveness in his own heart. He is thankful that his work keeping the ship afloat occupies his attention most of the time, and hides the 'inner truth'. (P.94).*

By commenting on his own sense of kinship with the ‘primitive’ natives, Marlow is implying that all men have aspects of the primitive within them; an assertion that justifies Freud’s notion of human psyche: the ‘id’ is man’s primitive force.

Marlow also believes that work provides escape from this ‘inner truth’ because in a world where truth is unknowable and men’s hearts are filled with either greed or a primitive darkness that threatens to overwhelm them, he seems to find comfort only in work. He notes that he escaped the jungle’s influence not because he had principles or high ideals, but because he had a job to that kept him busy. Conrad’s vision about the effects of colonization in the Congo is more centralized on the self discovery of his main characters in the novel; Western Culture and Civilization have negative impacts on several sectors of development of Africa. The damage of the human soul is not related to the political and economic consequences in Conrad’s description to give a wide opinion and perception about the myth behind Colonization and Imperialism in Africa.

**Chapter Four:
Other Perspectives for Conrad's perception**

Besides Joseph Conrad's view and vision of the way that Africans were treated during the colonial period, the impacts of the Western civilization on Africa and the suffering caused by imperialistic powers can be noticed in several sectors of development. Colonization, greed and the mistreatment of human people were in actual fact the reality of the situation that shocked Conrad when he traveled in the Belgian Congo. However, African cultures and civilizations, the pillars of strength of political and economic development, are also affected by the ruthless exploitation but not really discussed in the novel.

4.1. Other Views about African Cultures and Civilizations

This unit of my research work goes beyond Conrad's perception of the situation of the Belgian Congo and Africa in general during the colonization. It shows how the models of the Western civilization and culture have precariously dominated the traditional values of Africa. It is important to stress that colonialism distorted and retarded the pace of cultural growth and trend of civilization in Africa and one of the most profound consequences of colonization has been how the political and economic rape of the colonies such as the Belgian Congo, has also led to what sometimes seem to be an unattainable cultural gap between the nations that were the beneficiaries of colonization (the Western countries) and those that were the victims of the colonial assault (the colonies, especially in Sub-Saharan). The era of colonial pillage led to the relative stagnation and often precipitous decline of traditional cultural pursuits in the colonies.

With Africa subjugated and dominated, the Western culture and European mode of civilization began to thrive and outgrow African cultural heritage. Traditional African cultural practices paved the way for foreign way of doing things as Africans became fully "westernized". Western culture now is regarded as frontline civilization and African ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in public domain. It is important to

emphasize fundamentally that urgent and more decisive steps need to be taken in order to reverse this trend, without which Africa may experience seasons of cultural extinction and drought of African values. It is appalling to note those two hundred years or so of colonization were not only destructive in terms of cultural heritage and values for which Africa was famous before colonialism but also precariously retrogressive as the continent was robbed of decade's opportunities: opportunities of self-development, opportunities of self-government and, indeed, opportunities of self-styled technological developmental pace.

There is need, therefore, for consciousness of the negative impact of Western civilization and culture on Africa in all spheres of her social, political, cultural, economic and religious civilizations. Thus, policy makers should begin to see the need to reappraise their policies that contribute to the cultural dearth of Africa or the ones that negate the principles of cultural revival.

It is also important to define "Culture and Civilization" in order to understand where the influence lies:

What is Culture? , what is Civilization?

Culture is beyond pattern of social celebration, rituals pertaining to birth and marriage, cuisine or sport; culture is about people's total way of life, the way people live, eat, worship, produce, create and recreate. It is the totality of a set of people's ideas, belief system, values and norms, which constitute the common bases of generally agreed social action.

Charles A. Ellwood, an American Socialist brings out several facets to the meaning of Culture when he defines it as follows:

a collective name for all behavior patterns, socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also material instruments or artifacts in which cultural achievements [sic] are embodied and by which intellectual features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects

etc..... The essential part of culture is to be found in the patterns embodied in the social traditions of group, that is, in knowledge, ideas, belief, values, standards, and sentiments prevalent in the group. The overt part of culture is to be found in the actual behavior of the group, usually in its usages, customs, and institutions..... The essential part of culture seems to be an appreciation of values with reference to life conditions. The purely behaviorist definition of culture is, therefore inadequate. Complete definition must include the subjective and objective aspects of culture. Practically, the culture of the human group is summed up in its traditions and customs; but tradition, as the subjective side of culture is the essential core.³⁵.

However, in its most widely used definition, Civilization is a descriptive term for a relatively complex agricultural and urban culture. Civilization can be distinguished from other cultures by their high level of social complexity and organization, and by their diverse economic and cultural activities. Civilization requires advanced knowledge of science, trade, art, government and farming, within a society. Western civilization, therefore, is a particular way of life, considered as superior and advanced identifiable with the people of the West.

In the light of the above, Civilization should be used as a complementary concept to culture. The impacts of Western civilization and culture on Africa are in several phases as I mentioned it above but my research work deals with two major effects that are the following:

- **POLITICAL EFFECT:** The colonial factor was essential to the understanding of the process of westernization in Africa itself. Political effect includes:
 - Distortions of natural boundaries without due recourse to antecedent institutions and cultures.
 - The Western civilization submerged and dismantled indigenous institutions and, in its place, a foreign rule was established. Traditional institutions before then were regarded as not only political authorities but also custodians of cultures.
 - Introduction of Westminster liberal democracy: This does not just work in Africa. It is not that Africa did not have its own pattern of democracy before

³⁵ Charles. Ellwood, *the Psychology of Human Society: An Introduction to Sociological Theory*. New York; London: D. Appleton and Company. P.115

imposition of liberal democracy but the typical democracy in Africa and its processes were submerged by westernization.

➤ **ECONOMIC EFFECT:** A major effect of European colonialism was the progressive integration of Africa into the world capitalist system, within which Africa functioned primarily as a source of raw materials for western industrial production. There was imposition of taxation, which forced Africans into wage labor. The exploitation of rubber production in the Congo that is the major description of Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* is very illustrative. Colonial economy also caused agriculture to be diverted toward the production of primary products and cash crops such as cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil etc... There was sudden shift in production mode from production of food crops to cash crops, a situation that caused hunger and starvation in Africa. Africa began to produce more of what she needs less and produce less what of what she needs most. Africa was perpetually turned to producer of primary raw materials, a situation that caused unequal exchange. The enterprises method of pillage established in the colonies to expropriate natural resources of Africa to Europe has facilitated ‘underdevelopment of Africa while engendered the development of Europe’.

Coincidentally by the moment I’m writing this unit of my research work (Thursday, May 7th, 2014), World Economic Forum for Africa is going on for the first time to be organized in West Africa, Abuja, Nigeria for three days, and I believe all the issues raised above, concerning the economic autonomy and real developmental projects for Africa will be discussed effectively by the participant African leaders.

The trend of cultural westernization of Africa has become very pervasive and prevalent, such that Western civilization has taken precedence over African values and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former. The post-independence Africa is confronted with how to have a true identity, a new

culture that is African in nature. It is on this basis that Africans can be truly proud of African culture.

4.2. Other Views about Africans' lives and Welfare

Although many negative effects resulted from imperialism, there were some positive effects on the lives and welfare of the colonized people. In *Heart of Darkness*, the effects of the tyranny of imperialistic rule in the Belgian Congo are more fictionalized by Joseph Conrad; however, the political impacts that the colonialism left in Africa were both positive and negative. First, the colonial powers introduced efficient system of administration in the country. It gave Africa a more structured political system and organized government. Many of the African countries still hold the same political system that was introduced to them during the days of Imperialism. Westerners also introduced political concepts like constitution and democracy. However, structured political system wasn't the only thing that the Western powers had introduced to the African society. They also brought in the idea of nationalism, which is the cause of many wars and revolutions in Africa.

The "civilizing mission" was not entirely bad, however. European efforts to improve colonies resulted in improved sanitation and education. Schools, hospitals and railroads were established. Bringing industrialization to Africa would also help the Europeans. Steam boats were used to bring raw materials up and down rivers. Quinine was an antibiotic brought to Africa to prevent Malaria. The Europeans conquered the Africans and mistreated them, but did improve their living conditions.

4.3. Recommendations to others studies

Western Imperialism had a complex and contradictory impact on Africa especially on the sub-Saharan African Countries. Some changes brought real gains; others had a destructive effect on African life that is felt down to the

present such as the economic and political instability. The following options should be considered if we want to save Africa from the ugly trend of cultural drought and dearth of her values:

- Africa should honestly admit her weakness and stand to stem the tide of Western cultural domination. This is highly possible by first “decolonizing the mind” of Africans and their leaders to begin to see what options are possible in the process and efforts of “de-westernize” cultural orientation of Africans.
- African countries should be interested in what other countries that stood against Western culture have achieved; it is important and significant, for instance, that countries like Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia that have chosen to de-emphasize foreign language ended up becoming great economies. At a time, India banned importation of Western clothes. Today, India is one of the largest producers of textiles in the world.
- It is not without reason that France is spending so much in the development of French language; it is not without reason that the Anglo-Saxon communities of Western Europe and North America are spending so much money to ensure the continued development of what they now call the language of diplomacy and commerce. Indigenous African languages should be mounted in Schools as a compulsory part of the Curriculum lessons in African culture, not as General studies but as core courses.

The following steps should be taken in order to expose students to a full understanding of the novel *Heart of Darkness* and the topic I explore:

- Show the movies I watched “White King, Red Rubber, Black Death”, and” Apocalypse Now” as well as the song I listened to “3 AM” by Eminem, during class at the end of the study of the novel and students will compare and contrast the novel and the movies, looking particularly at the similarities and differences in how the main characters are portrayed in each.
- It is also advisable to ask students to draw conclusions about how the themes related to the main ideas discussed in the novel including the ones I analyze

above are approached in the novels and movies. I believe watching the movies will definitely help the visual learners and give all the students additional text connections.

Conclusion

The book is a record of events experienced by Conrad when he was in the Belgian Congo. Marlow, the main character, personifies Conrad himself who appears in the story and talks about his philosophical views. Conrad made the journey into the Congo in 1890 and he returned ravaged by the scars, mental distraction and illness. Marlow experienced the violent menace of nature, the insensibility of reality and the moral darkness.

Civility, civilization and civilize are man's resistance against the power and mystery of the nature of the self. The tragedies of a hero and heroism are obvious in the novel. As Marlow fights against the enemy, the more he begins to be like the enemy; the more he kills beasts, the more he becomes like a beast.

Conrad also focuses on the conflicts and moral ambiguities of European investigation and development of its colonial empires. Kurtz is an anti-civilization figure. During the trip into the wilderness, they discover their true selves while they keep in contact with savage natives. Both Marlow and Kurtz search for truth, both suppose that they know the truth about their good and moral intentions. When Marlow encounters the white agents, he is shocked and turns away from the civilized men. Marlow finds out that there is a savage monster in him, and in all men in his mind. He is forced to accept his disenchantment with Kurtz, and is terrified of the identification. Defenders of Conrad argue that the narrator does not speak in Conrad's voice. His experiences of the question of who we are, the exploitation of the hidden dark regions of the inner self, are presented more powerfully than any other aspects of the novel.

Conrad wrote this novel to examine civilization and as Freud says; "Civilization describes the whole sum of the achievements and regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes- namely, to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations."

If we look at *Heart of Darkness* and apply Freud's notion of the human psyche, we can consider Marlow's journey as a psychological journey. Kurtz and Marlow

both are seduced by unexplored Africa. Marlow and Kurtz portray two different aspects of man's personas. Marlow reflects the 'ego', the more rational side and Kurtz represents the 'id' that's man's primitive force. Kurtz is Marlow's 'alter ego'. By viewing Freudian's tripartite model of the mind as being in Kurtz psyche, we can conclude that the 'id' of a person is separated from his 'ego' and 'superego' in the African jungle. This essay does not want to argue that the novel is a journey or fall to hell, but that it describes, directly or indirectly, a voyage within, like Marlow's self-discovery. Every person has a lighter and darker side. As Marlow's obsession with Kurtz increases, it shows us how much he wants the truth.

Therefore, Kurtz serves as the personification of man's capability for evil and a symbol of the European colonist as well. Marlow's acceptance of Kurtz at the end of the novel shows his approval of his own potential for the evils of colonialism too. Both men had seen the spectacle of human ability for evil, and they had recognized 'the horror, the horror'. Marlow says about him, "I was getting savage", that he was becoming like Kurtz. Inside of every human soul is a savage evil that is repressed by the society. Marlow and Kurtz can be inferred as two diverse aspects of the self. Kurtz stands for the id (the desire to satisfy instinct) and Marlow stands for the ego (the human unconscious). Although the theme of the story is about the human quest for self-discovery in general, Marlow's quest to get a vision of his self-hood is diverged to the history, imperialism, colonialism and sexuality of the novel.

As it is pointed out in the novel, this evil side flourishes during one's isolation from culture and civilization. History is full of such examples that have occurred when someone encounters another culture, so it makes people discover something about their true selves.

The founder of the Congo Reform, Edmund Dene Morel, described *Heart of Darkness* as the most powerful thing ever written on the subject and the title became synonymous with the tortured African world of the Congo, suffering under the autocratic rule of King Leopold, a man described as having "a great

genius for evil".

The title of the book is a metaphor. The real darkness is not in Africa, but has been originated from Europe. It can be associated with the evil of the Congo's colonizers and their mistreatment of the natives. *Heart of Darkness* will remain as one of the most profoundly significant landmarks between European and African. The imperialist imagination that perceived a world of materialistic morality, inappropriate social modes and aggressive values has registered in this fiction. The Domino pieces, the keyboard, an altercation between an African and European over two black hens, the Belgian woman wearing a white dress and knitting black wool, dark eyes in a pale face, shrunken black heads with white teeth signify the imperialistic mentality. In conclusion, *Heart of Darkness* is not just a fiction, but it is about a real continent on which millions of Africans suffered and died because of European brutality during centuries of slave trading and colonization.

My research work concludes with the following opinion that what makes mankind tragic is not that they are victims of the nature, it is that they are curious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the condition of this earth is very well, but as soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife, the tragedy begins.

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Annex:
Illustrative pictures to the study



Marlow's &
Conrad's
1889-90 journey into
"Heart of Darkness"

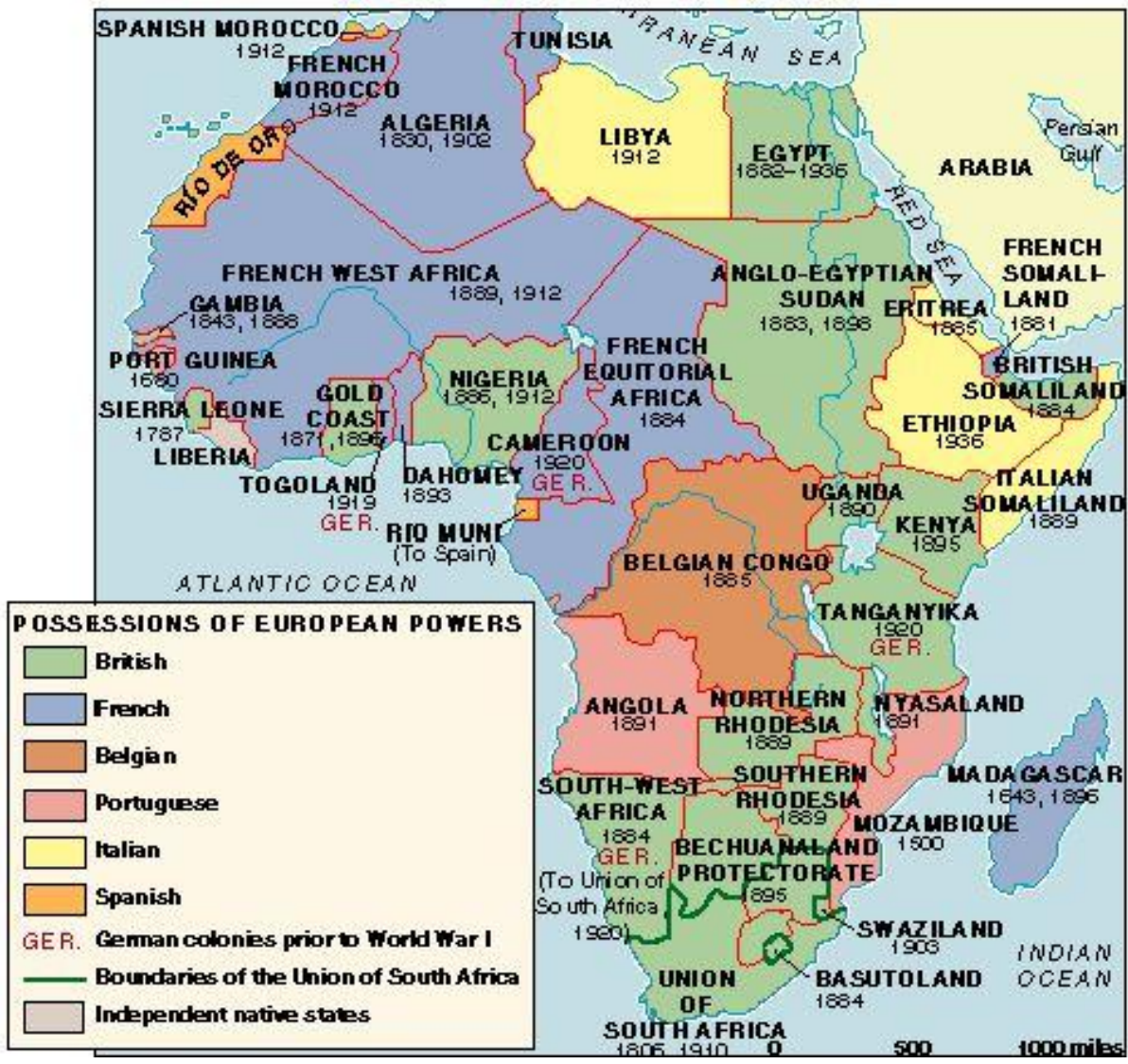


Joseph
Conrad
(1857-1924)

Historical Background

- Heart of Darkness





KING LEOPOLD II OF BELGIUM



Ruled: 1865-1908