

CONRAD'S CRAFTSMANSHIP

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Heart of Darkness is a metaphor for a psychological exploration to the heart of human nature and the animal selves that lurk beneath our civilized veneers. The true darkness is the beast within and the case with which we may backslide when external constrictions are removed. Conrad lulls us into his “great dark mediation” with the rhythm of his prose, the sense of advancing and receding. We are offered vague images of great swaths of time that periodically focus in on sharply rendered scenes. (Albert Guerard “Introduction” *Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer* (ii))

Conrad believed that the style of the novel “must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic to the suggestiveness of music which is the art of arts.”(viii) Joseph Conrad was quite conscious of his manner; he has given a theory of it. This is the direct echo of his inevitable preference. Art is self sufficient; the art has no object but to fully transmit the impression of reality; and the senses are the best, or rather the way only open to this expression. Therefore the novelist must draw from all the resources of the arts, whether of colour and shape or of sound; his work should have the bright hues of painting, the solidarity of sculpture, the rhythm and harmony of music. He has fulfilled this programme to the letter; not with painstaking accuracy, but with the sovereign ease of a talent which when obeying rules is but following its own instinct.

Conrad was rightly a stylist. Broadly speaking he is an artificer of splendid periods, an evoker of atmosphere, and a translator of concrete phenomena into living words. His prose is rich, glowing, atmospheric, eloquent and superb. His prose style is in reality the translation of thoughts, feelings, and perception into words with the minimum loss of intensity. His is the style of extreme flexibility, expressiveness and interest.

Conrad's style has a rich descriptive power. He can describe colourfully and vividly an emporium in Soho in *The Secret Agent*, a luxuriant jungle scene, sunrise and all. Similarly, the Patna's interrupted voyage across the Arabian Sea is an amazing description. The scenes which he calls up are very varied; but their succession naturally finds a center in the image of

sea. It is from the deck of the ship that he witnesses the unrolling of the sights of the world, the smiles and the furies of the ocean, the shipboard dramas, distant shores, the landscapes and manners of Oceania, of Asia, of America, and of those English seaports where the liners find their way back, make up an intensively vivid show which forces itself upon our view like a striking, almost haunting décor. The registering of lights, sounds, odours and tastes is with Joseph Conrad's characters a constant automatic activity, which none of the emotions of life can interrupt. The artist, who has fixed so many sensations and found the most fitting words to express them, has contributed, along with Kipling, to broaden the descriptive range of the English language.

The tone of Conrad's prose is conversational often. In *Nostramo*, for example, he counterbalances the grandness of conception by a casual conversational manner which helps immensely in assuring the reader of the truth of the events described. Later, when *Chance* is written, Conrad maintains the suggestions of the truth of the extraordinary situations by an extreme freedom of the conversational tone. The conversational tone used as a device for persuading the reader that a story was "nothing but the truth" was less difficult stylistic achievement for Conrad than the adaptation of the style to the speech of simple, uneducated men and such characters as he used for the satirical purpose. Some of the funniest and the truest effects ever achieved in fiction are due to Conrad's amazing use of his adopted language to recreate the individuals of plain sea-men.

In the use of the English Language, Conrad has exhibited remarkable skill. He has cultivated the prose style of a lyrics poet.

His prose bears close affinity to the prose of De Quincey and Ruskin. He could be a master of English Prose 'comparable in felicity of language and sweep of eloquence' with the ornate prose writers of the English language like Ruskin and Newman.

Conrad employed a few words 'exotic; 'enigmatic', 'inscrutable' quite frequently in his writings. He wrung the maximum effect from the use of words. He employed rhythm and alliteration and achieved a prose style akin to poetry. He introduced a prose "equally noble in its sonorous cadence, equally sure." But when he wrote below his best, he became "over – ornamental, self-conscious and artificially stylized." He then entered into monotonies and repetitions trying to give the impression of colour and vigour which could not be possible in an artificial style. But with all these blemishes, his prose style is magnificent and can serve as a good model for those who seek to fly on the wings of imagination to land in remote and exotic realms and enjoy the life of the seas and tropical jungles.

Conrad's approach to language is poetical and he is aware of the magical potency of words. "The things as they are, exist in words, therefore words should be handled with care lest the picture, the image of truth abiding in facts, should become distorted or blurred." [iii] As an impressionist, upholding the primacy of sensual appeal, he strives to achieve the pictorial and musical effect and his pages abound in concrete and precise images. The earlier manner is opulent and rhetorical, but maturity brought a greater restraint, subtler use of alliteration, repetition and assonance and a close harmony of form and content.

Joseph Conrad's vocabulary shows all the concrete wealth of the Anglo - Saxon stock. He displays, in some fields at least, a rare virtuosity in the use of technical terms, his knowledge of the things and words of the sea, with which he is most intimately familiar,

exceeds that of Kipling. He knows, at need, how to seek effects in the ample dignity of Latin vocabulary. So glowing luxuriant, and habitual is this delight in words, that it reveals through its very development, a conscious apprenticeship of language, a manifest and all-complacent handling of linguistic resources seems of point. In fact, Joseph Conrad's prose style, at least during the early part of his career, would leave upon British ears an impression of slightly exaggerated sonorousness and rhythm.

According to Baker, "Conrad works as an impressionist; he moves as a psychologist, and he writes as a realist." [27] Hence his plots are realistic. They represent both the inner and outer realities. He handles plots to create an atmosphere and give sense of depth and reality to the characters. He exploits even the supernatural to make his plots more suspenseful and dramatic. *The Shadow Lines* is no more than a story of fear induced by quite earthly causes such as calm weather and fever raging among the crew. But the crew suffers from a superstitious awe of their late captains' malignant spirit.

Ian Watt explores the formal elements of *Heart of Darkness* combine to create a literary Impressionism. In this connection he states :

Conrad's style reflects his intention, which is to embody uncertainty and doubt-that which we cannot know. Watt also I use the term "delayed decoding" to describe the strange non-linear order in which Marlow sometimes provides us with information. This technique tries to approximate the way in which we make sense of real life. Sensation intrudes to pull out attention away from some task with which we are engaged, we divine the source of the sensation, then we begin the cognitive work of sense-making. While Impressionism moves from sensation to thought and to idea, Symbolism proceeds from the other direction, taking an abstraction in trying to "to clothe the idea in a perceptive form" (358).

Conrad's plots are remarkable for his power of invention, whereas other novelists, such as Jane Austen know their world very well and clearly and are confined to their limited experience. Conrad incorporates in his novels things which run from the earth to heaven. He found the world much less clear. His obliqueness is not a method specially assumed for writing a different kind of novel. It results naturally from his way of looking at life, from his which to mirror the complexity of human beings. In Conrad, as in all serious art, technique and theme are intricately bound together.

The most obvious feature of Conrad's plots is that they are melodramatic. He is the novelist of extreme situation. His plots are concerned with happenings in exotic lands and tropical violence. Conrad does not organize his plots very well. Too often he delays the action while he paints a scene or analyses a character. His plots are of over complication and obtrusive symbolism. His endings are hurried and unsatisfactory. Conrad's plots unprepared and loose. They are full of violent happenings too.

In fact Conrad's main concern was not with plot. It was with something deep, something blue, that is, the vastness and the depth of the sea that interested him. He wanted to present his imagined world. This search for significant, for a full and true presentation of his

imagined world, makes Conrad a painter of individual scenes than the master of long plot. The best of these scenes draw their meaning from what has gone before and from what is to come after. In *Nostramo*, the fully realized blackness of the story will be in our minds as we watch Docud die many pages later. In between the two events in that long scene, between Doctor Monygham and *Nostramo* with the dead Hirsch, are arranged. And that is why Conrad's novels are built up, by impressive scenes and less those of his shorter tales where there is less linking to be done. Hence, the compact strength of *Nigger*, *Typhoon*, *The Secret Sharer* and *Shadow Line*, all of which are extended short stories. Conrad's plots are romantic as well as realistic. He maintains a balance between romanticism and classicism. He regards violence as an ordinary course of man's experience. He often sets his most exotic scenes by minutely observed and sordid details.

Conrad's theory is: "My task I am trying to achieve is, by power of the written word, to make you feel-it is, before all, to make you see." [viii] Conrad was the laureate of sea-life and the life of jungles. Instead of photographically presenting sea-life and the life of tropical areas with extreme realism, he sought to interpret the sea-life and the life of forests and through the colour of his imagination give the impression of that life. 'He was again like Hawthorne in portraying the effect that an object makes upon him who observes it. So he became a master of impressionism which is poles apart from realism.'" (W.J. Long 843)

Conrad was interested in two subjects. He chose to make his own experiences of sea-life and tropical areas as the subject matter of his novels. The background of his novels is furnished by the sea and the luxuriant forests of Malaya. Another subject which kept Conrad engaged is the principle of fidelity and faith between man and the distracting power of evil in human life. These two themes make Conrad a Romanticist and a Moralist as both these strains run through his works.

Peter Brooks pays particular attention to the narrative structure in Conrad's novel. He shows that the narrative is a "representation of an effort to reach endings that would retrospectively illuminate beginnings and middles" (376). He further comments thus :

Broadly speaking atmosphere is the setting or the natural background to a work of art, suffused and coloured with human emotions and moods, its own turn acting and reacting on these moods, and thus intensifying them. Conrad's settings are romantically realistic. His stories and novels are set against the background of wild seas or forest or islands. They are set in Congo or Malaya or the East, with their rivers, their wildernesses, their dense sky-touching trees, their unbroken silences, as well as the vast expenses of ocean, both in tranquility and in storm. All these were quite familiar to Conrad. But he describes them, minutely and realistically.

In Conrad's novels, the human mind, its moods and emotions and the atmosphere constantly act and re-act on each other. The atmosphere grips his readers overpoweringly. It is this interaction of the natural and the human which makes Conrad's atmospheres so thrilling and exciting. It is for this reason that the atmosphere of *Nostramo* is so very thrilling and wonderful. Conrad enriches the settings of his novels by his poetic descriptions and visual effects. Conrad's astonishing power of visualization of description is shown in such pictures, a power he used poetically. It is evident that in his capacity for grasping an atmosphere, and

grasping it so strongly that he makes it not only real at the moment of description, but pervasive all through the narrative.

Many a time, Conrad's atmosphere is so strongly charged with the menace of disaster or the promise of delight that it becomes acutely oppressive. In *Heart of Darkness*, for example, the repetition of Mr. Kurtz's name, echoing like a refrain through the wilderness, gives a dream-like legendary quality to the whole atmosphere. The very spirit of tragic fate seems to brood over the story. There is an over-hanging sense of uneasiness which sometimes becomes too terrible. Sometimes of this kind of feeling is also evoked by the atmosphere of Patusan, just before the ultimate catastrophe. The very hills and forests convey a suggestion of some immanent, inevitable disaster. Light, subtle touches of description, hints thrown out casually, acquire sinister meaning in the light of future events. "Conrad's atmosphere is all As Long puts it, pervasive; it envelops a story from beginning to the end. It is always there as part of the whole substance of a book". [844] Besides the sea, he had an intense sense of the forests, rivers, and swamps of the tropics, and in his books they give out the very spirit of their dark and somber appearance. In *Heart of Darkness* the silliness and the darkness of the background, bring in an ominous, antagonistic presence, till an acute sense of its horror and dread, grows upon the reader. Such was Conrad's sense of the tropics that even when he writes of England and of Northern countries, his atmosphere has the opulence of the tropics.

Conrad follows the objective and dispassionate method of portraying a character. That Maupassant and Flaubert exerted great influence on Conrad, is a well-known fact. In *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad adhered scrupulously to the method and ways of Flaubert. Later on, he modified this method considerably and evolved a technique altogether his own. He discovered his "Marlow," and Marlow enabled him to work out his own technique of turning inward to the full.

In the method associated with "Marlow" is to be found a complete key to the understanding of Conrad's technique of characterization and story-telling. Marlow is introduced into *Youth*, and then into *Heart of Darkness*. In *Lord Jim*, Marlow becomes still more useful and then of course, in *Culture*, he becomes the author's alter-ego. Conrad was primarily concerned with the mystery of human nature. His problem was to secure the advantage of the many points of view without losing that of coherence. "Marlow" enabled Conrad to do certain things which he could not do in his own person as the author.

Conrad showed the readers characters from the outside in such a manner that the readers could see them vividly with their entire colour and in myriad forms. The characters became so bright and revealing that their innermost minds appeared naked before the readers' eyes. And all times Conrad went on modifying the original picture with subjective interpretation and comment. This is Conrad's version of interior monologue. This is his own technique of turning inward.

Instead of the introduction of the pure interior monologue, Conrad applies the technique of introducing the pure, brightened and lightened images of the externals adding subjective guesswork to it. Henry James had used much the same method with variations. Conrad's methods was not as complex as James' and was yet supremely effective as far as it went. As a subjective man with a vision of his own and yet committed to the ideal of objectivity, Conrad struck upon a middle course and followed it with consummate skill. This

explains the introduction of Marlow. Marlow came into being to help its creator to attain his end of objective storytelling and characterization without sacrificing the subjective and psychological elements. Conrad's contribution to the development of the new technique is indeed very great. He took the Jamesian method a step further by rendering objectively the states of mind of his characters, illuminated all through with subjective comment and interpretation. He came very near the method of interior monologue and the Stream of conscious techniques. His is undoubtedly one of the boldest experiments in the field of fictional technique.

Like the Stream of consciousness writers, such as Virginia Woolf, Conrad could have placed us within the mind of his characters and given us their interior monologue. But this is not his method; rather he uses the technique of the multiple points of view. The character is shown through different eyes and from different angles. A number of characters and incidents are focused on the central personage so as to bring out his complexity and individuality, and in this way is built up a perfectly rounded, three dimensional figure. Thus in *Lord Jim*, Stein Jewel, Brown, Cornelius, Chester, Stanton, the French Lieutenant, and a host of other minor figures, serve to reveal the inner self of Jim. The novelist has invented Marlow, the narrator, who acts as a father-confessor to Jim and to whom Jim pours out his heart, all his spiritual anguish and frustration. The action moves backwards and forwards, both in time and space, digressions introduced, and are flashbacks. The result is one of the most individualized and memorable personalities in all literature.

The elements of physical discomfort, such as hardship, danger, isolation and death which envelop the story will be explained in a Marlow-like way to his audience

The whole series of adjectives - incomprehensible, detestable, mysterious, powerless and nouns-savagery, wilderness, fascination, abomination anchor the underlying meaning of the story and have an important effect on the reader, as they obscure the interpretation of events. Darkness is the presence that does not allow for the perception of reality of that mysterious life. This presence that surrounds all of man's efforts in the jungle is listened to by Kurtz and he goes mad while Marlow recognizes it but refuses to listen. At this critical point, when Marlow's senses cannot perceive reality, he turns to Kurtz, the only one who can help him. Throughout the journey, different voices have announced the white man as an artist, as an interpreter of life. Marlow is longing to meet Kurtz, longing for the shade of 'Mr. Kurtz. As Francis A. Hubbard remembers his painting is the first thing about the Congo that has arrested Marlow; but what surprises him more is that Kurtz had painted the somber, sinister sketch when, like himself, he had been stuck in the Central Station. This makes Marlow feel an affinity with this prodigy he had earlier dismissed, with this emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else. (214)

Kurtz is the only man in whom he can feel interest, and his interest is quickened to passion when he learns that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had entrusted him with the making of a report for future guidance. 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 and the man, that he follows him even though he has no clear sense of his behaviour and thinks that "this must have been before his – let us say-

nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which – as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times – were offered to him – do you understand?”.[45] Marlow knows that Kurtz’s experience has become a whole horror, but he cannot avoid living his genuineness, his authenticity.

For Marlow she is savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent, and when we compare this splendid woman with Kurtz’s European fiancée. We are setting side by side dynamic energy with sterile hypocrisy, life with death. For this reason, according to Cox, “the novel can be interpreted, in a Freudian manner, as a journey into the wilderness of sex, a fantasy shaped by Conrad’s own divided impulses”, since Kurtz represents “Marlow’s shadow self, the secret sharer, and the voyage of exploration is a night journey into the unconscious” (45). Thus, once back in Brussels, Marlow decides that he will be loyal to her sorrow rather than to Kurtz’s death, what for Richard Ambrosini means that he uses his memory as a shield against the superficial sanity of its citizens, and that “the man who has died with a vision of the horror has been left behind in the protected world of idea truthfulness” (114). His dialogue with Kurtz’s Intended illustrates the price Marlow is going to pay for the girl’s sanity:

And in this atmosphere, listening to the Intended’s words, Marlow asks himself: Which Kurtz is more real, the one in his memory or the one perpetuated by this woman’s sorrow?:

‘You knew him best,’ I repeated. And perhaps she did. But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and only her forehead, smooth and white, remained illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love (70).

At this moment, as Allan Junter affirms, “Marlow has entered a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for human beings to understand, eventually agreeing to lie for Kurtz, to cover up his crime. “Marlow has to lie because he cannot agree to shatter the moral world of the Intended”, since her world is based on her love for Kurtz, that “shows itself in deepest mourning a year later. Love is *prima facie* a generous emotion. Her wait for him is self-abnegation, but is there not a hint of dramatic self-indulgence in the scene, in the egoism of having a hopeless cause to believe in?” (53). Marlow feels the world crumbling around his when the Intended asks after Kurtz’s last words in a heartbroken tone

‘Repeat them’, ‘I want - I want - something - something - to - to live with’, she insisted. ‘Don’t you understand I loved him – I loved him - I loved him!’, I was forced into saying a downright lie: I pulled myself together and spoken slowly. ‘The last word he pronounced was - your name’ (71).

This last scene, like the rest of *Heart of Darkness*, is an example of how Conrad’s prose is rich, precisely because of “the absence of concretely visualized outlines of tangible features not so much in language itself as in some of the situations and impressions it evokes”, and also because “the frame narrator is drawing the reader’s attention to the duality of Marlow’s story”. He warns his readers that “they must not concentrate on Kurtz’s account of the events in which he is protagonist”, but rather “one the distortions which the re-creation of his subjective experience produces on the narrative”. Thus, “the meaning of the episode lies in the traces of how he experienced those events”. (Ambrosini, 90) Marlow at the end of his

narrative admits : Hadn't he said he wanted only justice? But I couldn't I could not tell her. It would have been too dark-to dark altogether (p.71). It is an eloquent portrait of a character who has grown out of telling the tale, as it becomes clear that he is attempting something that seemed impossible, i.e. to render the meaning of a dream. For this reason, the narrative – shaped by the contours of a voyage, a pilgrimage – is associated with impotence. And in this contours progress into darkness, Conrad's use of Marlow allows him to develop a sense of narrative complicity with the story, complemented by the ensuring human involvement.

Moreover, since Marlow's narrative is retrospective, as H.M. Daleski points out, he does not recount his experience in the light of a gained knowledge (52). He does not understand the meaning of his experience at the beginning of his narrative, and for this reason the tale itself becomes an attempt to penetrate its significance – thus the figure of the Buddha at the end of the novel, symbolizes the attempt to achieve a valid conclusion. “The fact”, as Jean-Aubryis Georges has suggested, is that the writer seems quite incapable of believing in any kind of thought-form, and his contempt is directed acidly towards a humanity that doesn't know that it wants” (121). *Heart of Darkness*, the most famous of Conrad's pilgrim's progress for our pessimistic age, ends with the suggestion that truth is unendurable in the context of everyday life, that what one needs in order to maintain the belief in safety and comfort is some sustaining illusion to which one can be faithful.

There is in Conrad's novels and stories, God's plenty. The abundance and variety of his characters is amazing. His characters constitute, says Richard Curle, “the richest mine of psychology that our generation has known. With their endless variety, with their exotic atmosphere, with their individuality of high romance and imagination, they have quite altered the face of modern literature.”[137] His characters are mostly drawn from the ranks of sailors, adventurers and explorers. He has also created villains like Kurtz and Donkin. His people are not merely Polish or English; they are universal figures.

As stated above, Malaysians, Borneans, Swedes, Englishmen, Germans, Dutch, French and people of many other nations, have their place in the novels of Conrad. They are foreign, they move and have their being in exotic settings, but despite their foreignness, they are also universals. They possess many basic and general impulses and experiences and aspiration of man in general. They are all “one of us,” in one way or the other.

Conrad's characters are real. They are drawn from the real people of life. For example, Jim in *Lord Jim* is drawn after the mate of a ship personally known to Conrad. Furthermore, Conrad's characters are atmospheric, that is, they are a part and parcel of their setting. They live in an actual world and not in the world of fancy. They are faced with the real problems of life. Conrad's male figures are very elaborate and distinct in their delineation.

Conrad's chief characters are dominated by a singly idea which works like an obsession with them. But this obsession does not make them eccentric like the characters of Dickens. Conrad tries to avoid exaggeration. For example, the obsession of Jim is that of recovering his honour. He has a morbid craving for distinguishing himself and for living down his disgrace. Similarly, Kurtz is dominated by the idea of ivory, and Charles Gould in *Nostramo* by the idea of silver. Conrad's heroes do not share their inner life with others, and so their actions are often misunderstood and wrongly interpreted. They remain mysterious figures, many a time, suffering from loneliness of their souls. “Conrad's characters are always

divided selves, fighting with themselves a fight between appearance and reality, between the face and its mask, between the soul and its shadow. The fight is to get rid of loneliness, the spiritual isolation a man is put to. The fight is to get happiness, real freedom.” (Hawthorne 173)

Marlow’s story starts with “a kind of frame-narrator’s grave, quiet, brooding voice” and this voice commits us, from the beginning, to “the interior resonance of the story” employing the first person, “to move free where he wishes in time, and therefore free to foreshadow his conclusion” (Henricksen, 27). Conrad introduces us into the narrative, starting how his main character had a passion for maps since he was a little boy:

Through the whole story, *darkness* means for Conrad savagery, primitivism, since the contrast between light and dark, related to the civilized and uncivilized dichotomy, has the connotations of good and evil. The references to the river suggests darkness, since it brings the snake image—a Biblical symbol of evil—which makes Eve disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit. At the opening of the story, while recalling his childhood fascination with blank spaces on maps, Marlow the teller of the story-within-a-story, who has a perspective at once intriguing and questionable—evokes a feeling of darkness during his explanation of what happened to him “one evening”, when he set out to encounter the wilderness. At this moment, we have the prophetic vision of the *darkness* that Marlow will find in his journey through his experience in the jungle:

In the growing darkness, Marlow is losing the thread of the story. Most importantly, he compares the narrative to a dream, which may be responsible for the kind of discursive distortion that affects the story itself. In this way, “we are made aware of Kurtz’s symbolic role through the recurrent dream-imagery, which locates him as a phantom in Marlow’s dream” (Geroski, 73).

It has been generally observed that women in Conrad’s novels are vague and blurred in outline, that they are sentimentalized, and idealized, and so they appear “unrealistic and shadowy.”

All his memorable women are good women. They are the charming and merciful order of Desdemona rather than the fiery and passionate order of Cleopatra. They are not insipid; some of his great women-figures are marvelously thrilling but they are not romantically inconsistent or instinctively passionate. Most of his women have material instincts. They have a true woman’s tenderness and are essentially feminine. Lens, Jewel in *Lord Jim*, Flora in *Chance*, Natalie in *Under Western Eyes*, Arlette in *The Rover* are some of the best known women-figures of Conrad.

The first narrator expatiates upon ‘the great spirit of the past’, on ‘all the men of whom the nation is proud’ their ships ‘like jewels flashing in the night of time’. These conquerors, ‘adventurers’, ‘settlers’, traders, ‘hunters for gold or pursuers of fame’ (he names such pirates and sackers of cities as Sir Francis Drake), are indiscriminately described as ‘bearers of a spark from the sacred fire’ – heirs of Prometheus. Marlow’s first world – ‘And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth’ – leads us to anticipate an end to this claptrap. Marlow avoids the worst of the first narrator’s verbal clichés, but not his clichés of thought. For him, too, dark simple means ‘uncivilized’.

The next black men Marlow sees are a chain-gang. They toil past him 'with that complete, death-like indifference of unhappy savages. He admits that he is 'a part of the great cases of these high and just proceedings'. A moment later he steps into 'the gloomy circle of some Inferno :

Modern fiction is specially characterized by symbolism and imagery. The modern novelist aims at "the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour or painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music by the power of written word to make you hear, to make you feel – before all, to make you see. The greatest achievement of the modern art and literature is the technique of indirection, irony and suggestiveness in contrast to the traditional technique of the deliberate attempt at ideation. This new technique keeps the artist and his art separate from each other: those who go to their works do not feel any sort of encroachment upon their receptive mind and sensibilities. They find themselves freely moving in a world of imaginatively recreated vision of the realities of life which they apprehend according to their own artistic sensibility. The artist tries his best to establish equivalence between his vision of reality and artistic characters, events and situations. For this purpose, he makes use of symbols. A symbol is a verbal or visual equivalence of the subjective vision of reality envisaged by an artist.

Like other novelists, Conrad also uses symbols and images. According to Manupassant, a great artist sees the essential in everything. Conrad follows this view and he is concerned with the symbolic qualities of experience. He makes use of not only the colour form and movement, but also shifts of perspective, stylistic and tonal variations and many other devices. In fact Conrad wants his readers to see beyond the merely illusive reality.

Heart of Darkness is a highly symbolic story. Almost all the characters are symbolic. Kurtz the main character is the symbol of greed for gold, callousness, materialism and savagery of the colonizers. Kurtz also symbolizes the instinctive, the irrational and the evil hidden in the subconscious of Marlow. He is Marlow's evil self, what Marlow could have become had he stayed longer in the *Heart of darkness*, or had he been without that devotion to duty which helps him to maintain his place. In the words of W.F. Wright, "the tragedy of Kurtz and the education of Marlow fuse into one story, since for Marlow that tragedy presents his furthest penetration into the *Heart of Darkness*." [144] The five female characters are all symbolic figures. The aunt of Marlow, who asks him to carry the light of progress and civilization to the savages of Africa, symbolizes the dream world, the world of illusion and ideality of most white men regarding their civilizing mission. They have no idea of reality of what is happening in the heart of Africa. The two women, knitting black wool outside the gates of the company in Brussels symbolize blind Fate working to cause ruin and disaster to mankind. They symbolise the unconscious fear of Marlow regarding his expedition to the unknown and mysterious heart of Africa. The mysterious native woman, tall and majestic who loves Kurtz, symbolizes silent, strong and self-sacrificing love. She also symbolizes perfect faith and innocence. Besides these, in the story 'darkness' symbolizes the darkness, of barbarism, ignorance, and evil which characterizes the heart of darkness in Africa. The rivers Thames and Congo symbolizes the flow of civilization and culture from England to Africa. The city of London symbolizes the heart of light, civilization and culture, just as Congo symbolizes the dark heart of ignorance and barbarism. The Buddha-posture of Marlow is

symbolic of his desire for self-knowledge. It symbolises the inner illumination and insight which he gains through his Congo voyage.