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**CIVILIZATION AND DARKNESS
IN CONRAD'S
HEART OF DARKNESS**

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PREFACE

It is difficult to study Conrad in a limited work because of his being a janiform writer both in his subject matters and style. Being one of the masters in English Literature he wrote a lot of masterpieces among which one of them, **Heart of Darkness** is going to be studied only from the point of view of civilization. It is aimed to give his understanding of civilization connotating the symbols and objects and light and dark colors.

It is impossible to mention all those who have helped me in the writing of this book with acts of kindness and I hope that they will accept my thanks expressed in a general form ; and I hope also whose names are inadvertently forgotton will forgive me.

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PLACE OF CONRAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

The changes that came over the English novel in the first half of the twentieth century—changes in technique, in point of view, in the whole relation between the author and his subject—represent something different from the changes to be expected in the development of an established art—from toward greater maturity, greater sophistication, or a more complex handling of the medium. The English novel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a public instrument dealing with what was significant in human affairs. Changes in social and economic position, new ideas in ethics, psychology, and many other matters concerning with individual and society created a new form which has been called modern novel.

Thus certain features of civilization which emerged about the beginning of the century were dealt by the modern novelists. As a result of changes and progresses in science and industrialization, men lived in a social economic world which was real, and the most real part of their behaviour was that which changed or in some way determined their position in that world. But this determined position was corrupting because men became more and more materialistic and selfish.

Joseph Conrad, dealing with the same subjects from a sociological, economic, psychological and political points of view explored again and again the ways in which social and political life are both necessary and corrupting. It is in this sense Joseph Conrad is the first important modern novelist in English. His finest novels and stories are all concerned, directly or implying, with situations to which

public codes-any of them are inapplicable, situations which yield a dark and disturbing insight which can not be related to any of the beliefs or rules which make human societies possible.

His subject matter and the technique with which he writes depending on his own experiences put Conrad among the universal fiction writers. Unique in his experience, his vision, his blend of racial characteristics and natural gifts, he stood alone in his own time. Despite his Polish background, Conrad's was a Western with an English awareness of moral issues, and a sense of form rare in writers of fiction. His Western mind dates back his childhood because the first writers he had read were Victor Hugo and Shakespear. He knew French very well but he always thought in English. In **A Personal Record** by the conclusive sentence he said. If I had not written in English, I would not have written at all.

He had won recognition from his fellow writers almost from the first. They were all aware of his high seriousness. His reputation, indeed, grow quicker than his income. H.G. Wells, so different in temperament, was an early, generous and acute critic. R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Henry James, Stephen Crane, W.H. Hudson and Edward Thomas were soon added to this admirers. Ford Madox Hueffer was one of his early collaborators.

He was a transitional writer between realism and modernism. Under the influence of above mentioned writers, he used the literary characteristics of both movements. His subject matters were the social, economic and political problems of the period. While dealing with these problems he used his own experiences, which makes him a

realist. His aim in his subject matter was to give a clear revelation of the truth underlying the particular human problems.

Opposing to the ideas of the community, sometimes as a clear satirist and sometimes as an indirect critic, he criticised the way of living and thinking of the people of his own time. Using symbols, outer and inner narrators flash-backs, impressionistic features in his critical works equates him among the modern writers .

On the other hand, taking interest in the reality and the secrets of human soul just like an adventure novel has made him to be considered as a romantic by some literary critics.

All these peculiarities show that Conrad was that kind of author who seemed, almost unconsciously, to intuit nearly every important development that the novel would take after him. Serious like Flaubert he turned dissatisfaction with existing forms into new ways of focusing upon reality.

He drew his literary methods from writers as disparate as Sterne, Richardson, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and James, among others, and to these he added his own insights and techniques His realization that the novel needed new life and his willingness to experiment together with his defense of the genre as a serious and mature undertaking, gave new dimensions to what he thought was the tired late Victorian form and managed to create a change of atmosphere in the novel (1).

His new atmosphere was not only in the technique but also in the subject matter which also put Conrad in the category of modern writers. His main concerns are to demonstrate the weakness of the preceding period to compare the civilized and uncivilized and to show the meaninglessness of the world. His socio-political bias lay almost always among in search for a stable identity in a universe which he considered as absurd.

Depending on his own experiences, he dealt with individual by making him the symbol of society in a severely realistic way. He made his heroes live the realities. So not the realities but the men face the reality. His reader is also living the conditions while reading his work and this was his sole aim. In the preface to **The Nigger of the Narcissus** he says;

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, before all, to make you see (2).

What were the things he wanted us to see? It is difficult to point out exactly what his philosophy was. Though he sometimes made interpretations of the related conditions, he did it implicitly. But it is explicit that in many of his books like **The Rescue, An Outpost of Progress, Heart of Darkness**, and somewhat in **The Nigger of the Narcissus** he wanted to give a clear-cut difference of the civilized and uncivilized minds. He criticized the Western mind in its masquerade of imperialism and arbitrary set of rules and judgement.

In Conrad's fiction the focus of the novel turns outward from its concentration on relations between man and man within a civilized society for the World-wide expansion of Western man's will to power. But this will to power created a mask under which the face of greed was hidden. So this hidden face was the face of western civilization.

None of us, perhaps none of the Western nations, has never sacrificed his material interests for abstract values (3).

Conrad gave his opinion about the Western mind and its civilization with this sentence. Under the influence of improving technology and science man lost his faith and moral ideals and turned out to be the wheels of a machine. As a result man became a materialistic beast whose evil thoughts suppressed. He lived only in the society which was an arbitrary set of rules and judgements, a house of cards built over an abyss. Being a member of that society, of course, man has suffered from its weaknesses.

Few men realize that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions and principles; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd; to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals in the power of its police and of its opinion (4).

In broader sense Conrad, with this passage implies that citizens could only live obeying the rules of society which was spoiled in its real values and whose only ideal was to progress at the cost of sacrificing its humanity. So according to Conrad, everything, it seemed, could be turned into an object of man's calculation, control, or evaluation. In **Heart of Darkness** Conrad shows how imperialism becomes the expansion of the will toward unlimited dominion over existence. What begins as greed, the desire for ivory, and as altruism, the desire to carry the torch of civilization to the jungle, becomes the longing to wring the heart of the wilderness and exterminate all the brutes. Here, Conrad shows the real face of Western civilization. The benign project of civilizing the dark places of the world becomes the conscious desire to annihilate everything which opposes man's absolute will.

It was the idea of progress in the Victorian period in England that led such an evil-hearted civilization.

The idea of progress, ... said Guizot, seems to me the fundamental idea contained in the word civilization (5).

and this idea opened the way of scientific and technological development. People were in search of better living conditions with the use of the products of technology. Improvements in science changed the minds. Church and religious instructions were looked suspectively, Dimensions of time and space became smaller and many industrialized countries devoted themselves to find new places. They were looking for raw materials to use in their factories and new

markets to sell their products. As a result imperialism and colonialism began.

Though the idea of progress was optimistic at first, it brought out poverty, hunger and disillusionment at the end. For the sake of progress man lost its humanly aspects as he became materialistic.

Conrad, in **Heart of Darkness** and **Nostromo** was concerned with the moral ambiguities of a progress linked to self-interest and the imperialistic exploitation of uncivilized peoples. He was not against progress but he always criticized the evil results of it. When the decadence, was clearly seen like many writers, he showed the results of progress.

The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence (6).

he wrote to his friend Cunninghame Graham. He saw progress only as a great adventure which would bring out a lot of victims many of whom are innocent.

And if the inferior race must perish, it is a gain, a step towards perfecting of humanity which is the aim of progress (7).

So when such crimes could be committed, it can certainly be said that Conrad came to look upon the idea itself with profound distrust. The result of this distrust led him to think as nothing matters. This idea of nothing matters shows that Conrad had seen the results of progress as a decadence in civilization.

CIVILIZATION IN HEART OF DARKNESS

In Conrad's view civilization is the **metamorphosis of darkness into light**. It is a process of transforming everything unknown, irrational, or indistinct into clear forms, named and ordered, given a meaning and use by man. This means the transformation of subjective things into objective ones.

Man's will to power was also a subjective thing, but science and technology turned it into objective. The progress made in science and technology of which the result was a world of industry created man of materialism. This materialism destroyed all the values and turned man into a beast whose only aim was to be powerful, to be the dominant. Man has lost his humanly characteristics and turned everything into an object of man's calculation control or evolution.

The position of Kurtz in **Heart of Darkness** gives us a good example of this control. When he left his country, his mind abandoned the ego being detached from his own culture and civilization, he began using his power of control on the natives. The things he abandoned were the elements of his culture were the subjectivism which became objective in face of reality. This escape from the mind, or in other words from subjectivism, led him to give up his moral values.

Although this ruthless, materialistic attitude characterizes the entire system and the men who are a part of it, there is one man who had come to the Congo in an honest effort to live up to the apparent ambitions of the European public. Conrad has here isolated Kurtz from his peers and subjected him to a test among strange and overpowering surroundings. The result of this test was, in a sense,

failure because Kurtz seemed to forget, as the others had done, that this was a mission of civilization and progress; instead he began to resort to unscrupulous tactics in order to gain ivory for himself. More than this, he began to succumb to a moral erosion which led to almost animalistic conduct. At last the darkness won him over and gained possession of his soul. Of course, this soul was his mind and when he had abandoned his ties with society his mind had also abandoned the civilized way of thinking which was carried out superficially and under the strict traditional, and social laws. So when he had abandoned the suppress of his society he also abandoned his social mind and then came out what was there in his ego.

When all these subjectivities turned into material wants and when the commercial spirit spread outward to conquer the world, the will to power over things led the way to expand throughout the world. The emissary mission of Kurtz was to discover, to colonize though it was to civilize in surface.

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at south America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth (B).

These blank places on the map were offering themselves to man's greed for power and knowledge. Thus the imperialistic idea of time showed itself and the idea of expansion was the result of industrialism which made the dimension of space small.

The idea of expansion and abandoning the ego created illusion in the minds. This illusion prevent them from seeing the reality.

In **Heart of Darkness** Marlow says;

It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream-making a vain attempt (9).

This dreamlike way of living changed the vision of things and events. They took different appearances in different places just as the way of life Kurtz led before coming-to Congo and after it. Kurtz-the enigmatic character-had come to the Congo in an honest effort to live up to the apparent aspirations of the European public. This is the *original* Kurtz. He *had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort*(10); he had been a *prodigy*, a true emissary of pity, science and progress; he had been a *special being*, a man of the new gang-a man of unlimited possibilities with the trading company because of his *virtue* (11). All these features had belonged to Kurtz before he came to the Congo. He lived in a different way among the citizens of his society under Common social laws.

After his coming to the Congo, he lost all his virtues. He had abandoned his ties with society and the illusion changed. Then the evil or nonmoral side of his id **came out** and made him a beast. Kurtz had finally

turned his back on the headquarters, on relief, and thoughts of home-perhaps setting his face towards the depth of the wilderness(12).

in an effort to accomplish great things for the cause of fame, distinction, success and power for himself. Then the struggle had begun—the struggle between good and evil, between accepted civilized conduct and amoral primitive behaviour. He seemed to forget his mission, instead ;

he began to succumb to a moral erosion which led eventually to almost animalistic conduct. He Struggled between diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries he had penetrated (13).

This change in the mood of Kurtz shows the civilization in Europe. He dominates the allegory as a symbol of European intelligence mastered by savagery and evil, because he had been the epitome of the western civilization.

All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz (14).

Here Conrad, in the name of Kurtz criticized the civilization of Europe. The serious condition of Kurtz becomes an ironic commentary on civilization and civilized man. At first the concept of civilization was idealized. It was indicated as humanizing, improving and instructing. Despite the apparently noble aspirations of the white men to bring civilization to the land of darkness, there are from the beginning some ominous signs that all is not as it seems or should seem. In this observation it is obvious that Conrad recognized the true nature of the so-called humanization as being nothing more than colonial exploitation of the Congo.

It was as unreal as everything else-as the philanthropic pretense of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading post where ivory was to be had so that they could earn percentages (15).

The fact is that in reality such an attitude or attempt leads to the happenings which are,

just robbery with violence and aggravated murder on a great scale (16).

and the representatives of civilization-such as pilgrims and Kurtz-led such an activity. Not only the men but also the existence of trading companies like the Eldorado Exploring Expedition show that the way that the Westerners lived was that.

To tear treasure out of the bowels of the earth was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe (17).

This way of life was the result of progress especially in industry which created a mechanic and materialistic sort of life. Though there was a civilization with its principles, it was artificial. People lived under the principles which exist on the surface. These principles never diminished the selfish and greedy side in the

mind and heart of man. They were measures only not to infringe upon the rights of other people. But of course, principles are not enough to perform that. Because the truth was in the minds and the truth was evil. To protect from this evil man has to have an inner strength to face not the *surface-truth* but *truth stripped of its cloak of time* (18). In **Heart of Darkness** Conrad says,

You must fall back on your innate strength; upon your own capacity for faithfulness. Of course you may be much of a fool to go wrong-to dull to even know (19).

The failure of Kurtz lies in the fact that he had no innate strength to resist against the devils in him. He couldn't choose the good sides of idealized civilization which was to live as a human and to live up to standards imposed by the civilized standards. On the other hand Marlow had that innate strength to struggle with the evil, to continue and obey the artificial principles of the civilization of his own society. He protected himself only by means of faithfulness and by never forgetting his duty which was the only way to protect oneself from the hypocrisies of industrial world-in other words white man's civilization.

Marlow, being an observer of things around him, has learned the inherent evil in every human heart. Of course, it was mainly Kurtz by means of whom he learned the falsity of the civilization which in most cases was not any better than the culture of the savages. He recognized that he had a *choire of nightmares* (20) and chose Kurtz and savagery over the civilized hypocrites. He chose Kurtz because, though too late, he had recognized the evil in him.

I was within a hair's breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it ... He had summed up-he had judged. The horror ! He was a remarkable man (21).

Here, Kurtz is not explaining the primitive life, or the situation in the jungle, he is just explaining the things in his mind. In other words, it was the civilization which was *horror*. At the end Kurtz became self-aware of himself, of his hypocrisy and of the hypocrisy of the Western people and their civilization.

From this point of view Conrad, although shows Marlow as the most humane person among the crew, later on using Marlow shows the bad side of civilization once more. In order to praise Kurtz, Marlow lied to Kurtz's Intended and showed that evil is inherent in man.

Conrad in **Heart of Darkness** didn't give a story of man's failure to achieve fame in the eyes of the world but, rather, a self-examination of the evil possibilities of his own psyche and of that of the entire human community. he wants to give us the deterioration of the people for the sake of materialistic desires. In this sense, we understand that, according to Conrad, civilization is not bad in general if it is lived faithfully but it is not somewhat enough to get rid of the evils in the minds. For him civilization is something which seems to stand with its principles but which makes people bad with the things it has brought together.

From this point of view, though Conrad seems pessimistic in his idea civilization of the Western man of whom Kurtz symbolizes, he is on behalf of civilization of which the rules and traditions work together in an harmony; in spite of their being deceitful because of their artificiality, people live under some traditions.

The strangeness of other people is hidden behind forms, clothes, institutions, and some convention always stands between man and man. Civilization is the triumph of the human, of the all too human (22).

According to Conrad the side of civilization is in the minds of people and it is the convention that prevents this evil committing bad things. And the conventions belong to a society, when you break relations with that society, you lead a solitary way of living and become evil like Kurtz.

DARKNES IDENTIFIED WITH CIVILIZATION

As we have said at the beginning of the second chapter, In Conrad's view civilization is considered to be a metamorphosis of darkness into light. One of the most important literary features of Conrad is his usage of symbols to express a lot of things through fewer words. In **Heart of Darkness** this feature can be seen clearly.

We knew that Conrad was pessimist in his view-point of civilization. He remains pessimist because of the idea of progress, the materialistic and imperialistic way of living and the greediness of people. The circumstance of that period in Europe was dark on the part of the individuals because of their being selfish. In the 19.th century Europeans performed a task not with the purpose of learning or realizing it but to prove themselves to be successful or to be regarded by the others. Thus they demonstrate themselves as if they were devoted to their task. But the opposite was the case. In such an appearance lies the selfishness of the people who eventually make up the society. Therefore the idea of the society was dark. It was dark because there lies the greedy side in the subconscious of the individuals.

For Conrad darkness is first of all a sensible experience. In other words it is the blurring of clear forms in an all-engulfing sensation of the fact that there is nothing to sense. Everything in his novels shows itself as a flash against a black background. So Conrad uses a black or dark background to indicate the real face of the things and ideas.

My thought goes wandering through vast spaces filled with shadowy forms. All is yet chaos, but, slowly, the apparitions change into living flesh, the shimmering mists take shape (23).

From this point of view darkness is the truth, but it is the masque of the truth which no one wants to accept as it makes ordinary human life impossible. It makes life impossible because it brings out the wild, greedy and materialistic side of the subconscious as in the case of Kurtz. When he entered the darkness, he also reached the truth which swallowed up him, invading his reason and destroying his awareness of his individuality.

Then the questions, what was this truth? Why was it dark?, come to the mind. For Conrad

The darkness is present at every moment and in every thing and person, underlying them as their secret substance, but also denying them as formlessness denies form, or as impersonality denies personality (24).

It was present at every moment and in every thing and person because of the ideas and life led by the individuals and policies carried out by the states. Every thing had a materialistic side which everyone wanted to reach. They only pretended to be civilized but in reality they were hypocritical as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. The policies carried out by the rulers were also dark for they were also hypocritical because of the corruption of colonial

exploitation though they pretended to bring progress, in other words civilization. Thus the reality was hidden at the background.

Life is the voluntary commitment of one's energies to the fulfillment of a noble idea. Apart from the grooves that society we live in brings about for our security in a state of subsisting, we can discover that we are free to be or to do anything, good or evil. We can not imply anything about the personality of a man if he withdraws from the world into silence and solitude. A man's moral and personality are reflected by his behaviour and attitude. Not by the words, but by *action*.

The solitude of the heart of Africa is symbolically appropriate for such an operation. Here Kurtz is free both externally and internally. In the depths of Africa Kurtz didn't feel the outside restrictions. On the other hand there were no internal prohibitions on his freedom, of course, the result was the exposure of the dark, wild side of his subconscious. This side of the mind is the real personality of a man, of the man of the 19th century Europe.

Thus, the heart of the darkness showed men their real face. Africa, with Conrad's words *the heart of the darkness* seems dark because it is the test, the condition under which one came into contact with the self. The journey that Kurtz made to the Congo was the journey into the depths of his heart, his mind and self. The test he undergone in dark Africa awakened

forgotten and brutal instincts the memory of gratified and monstrous passions (25).

and it,

whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude-and the whisper proved irresistibly fascinating (26).

But Kurtz was not manly enough to face the darkness. Though Marlow sometimes implies that Africa had been the cause of Kurtz's destruction, he himself was a hollow man. Because the place he came from and the ideas beneath the surface were evil. They were suppressed there, in Europe.

You can't understand. How could you? With solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums-how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solituted-utter solitude without a policeman-by the way of solitude-utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbor can be heard whispering of public opinion (27).

From the above passage it is obviously understood that the European society stands for dark side of civilization because of its irresponsiveness to the happenings around, indifference to the people

around and irresponsibility for itself and for the circumstances. But they weren't aware of this situation. How could they be as long as they are kept under the supervision of the police.

As we know Kurtz is the representative of Western civilization,
All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz (28).

By sending Kurtz to the heart of darkness, Conrad put him in a test ; in fact it is not Kurtz but European people who were put in the test in the name of Kurtz. In this point Africa seems dark because it is the test, the condition under which one can come into contact with the self.

The inner truth which is hidden, or suppressed is awakened by Africa. So Kurtz is not a victim of Africa, he is the victim of his self, his community and his civilization.

Africa is like existence, is truth. In contrast to the muddle and haze of the company's operations, Africa is real. The blacks have a vitality. And Marlow altogether prefers his crew of cannibals to his passengers. Ironically, what is dark in darkest Africa is not the land or the people, but the world introduced by the bringers of light and civilization (29).

Thus, we understand that Conrad uses *darkness* ironically for Africa in order to show the real darkness. On the contrary, the darkness of Africa brings illumination to the conquerers by making them be aware of their self. The last words of Kurtz, The *horror!* The

The horror (30) are the signs of his self-discovery ; the discovery of his brutal, evil-hearted feelings and deeds and the discovery of the darkness in his own heart. It was dark, he was faithless and for the faithless there can be no illumination. At the end, he was swallowed up by this darkness and this made him lead a savage life, because he was too blind to see the light, the light of real, faithful civilization which could only be reached by devoting oneself to a real, good-willed purpose. Kurtz understood the meaning of this reality at the moment of his death but the time was up.

At this point, it is necessary to indicate what the real, good-willed purpose was according to Conrad. On the other hand, this indication will help us to understand what Conrad thought about how to eliminate the darkness over civilization.

In a sense, civilization is a social ideal. In this social ideal lies a hierarchical structure, in which those at the bottom are expected to obey to those above, and thus forming a perfect organism. From the individual point of view submission to civilization may mean being a member of the apathetic community and setting up for oneself an-ideal of glory, the winning of power and fame for the accomplishment of some difficult tasks. For a person who can manage this the only standard for the meaning of life is nothing but his own status in the eyes of others.

These ideals must depend on a simple idea, and this should be efficiency. This efficiency can be obtained by devoting oneself to this work.

To be safe, civilized man must have a blind devotion to immediate practical tasks... (31).

Conrad thinks that duty is a protection against unwholesome doubt or neurotic paralysis of will. At least it will protect man when as he has not have enough time to think and to do evil things. Conrad emphasizes this idea in his various works. In **The Nigger of the Nacissus** he praises the,

everlasting children of the mysterious sea (32).

remaining innocent and inarticulate, faithful to the sailor's code of obedience and being devoted to duty, and in **Chance** praising the peace of the sailors, he again implies that sailors have time only for work and sleep.

Conrad always uses the seamen as the good examples of order and civilization because of their being away from illusory, unreal attitudes of other people. He uses the seamen as good examples because the people on the land lead an uncivilized life implicitly as we have already quoted. The social ideal of such a society is an imaginary one as it is directed by some institutions and conventions which prevent people from seeing the reality.

Therefore a civilization in which obedience and fidelity are kept alive is the true one that can be fulfilled by devotion to work as in the case of Marlow in **Heart of Darkness**. Marlow is protected from the darkness and wilderness by the hard work good enough to keep his river steamer going :

I had to watch the steering, and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook. There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man (33).

While implying this social ideal Conrad uses Kurtz to show the results of infidelity and unfaithfulness. His purpose is to make the reader think and see the things at the background. He leaves the interpretations of the events to the judgement of the reader. He identifies the objects as they appear and he creates images for them and people which cause them to appear mysterious. This method of Conrad is called demystification, that is, the detachment of the meaning from the object.

In **Heart of Darkness** we can see the best example of this technique. It is structured as a passing of portals, a traveling through states which leads the reader ever deeper into darkness. The aim is to make the reader see whatever Marlow reaches and to show it as a misleading illusion, something which must be rejected for the sake of the truth behind it. Conrad succeeds in this way in showing civilization as a,

fantastic invasion directed by a flabby devil, and as a sordid farce acted in front of a sinister black-cloth (34).

On the other hand, the two silent women knitting in the office of the company ; the French ship firing shells one after another into the immensity of Africa ; the disorder of the first station Marlow reaches, with its dying natives, its aimless dynamiting, its machinery lying

broken ; the perfectly dressed accountant keeping up appearances in the jungle ; the stout man with mustaches trying to put out a blazing warehouse fire with water carried in a tin pail with a hole in it ; the bloody boots of the steamer, the target-reaching spears are all the examples having a hidden meaning in them. By means of these symbols and by his narrators, Conrad's aim is to reach the elusive truth behind superficial facts. Though the above examples seem to be objective, in fact they are subjective in the sense that they each give examples of the absurdity of the imperialist invasion.

It is obvious that the most important images used in the novel are light and darkness. Conrad as in many of his novels, in **Heart of Darkness** habitually calls attention to the conflict between the qualitative aspect of things and the interpretation of what is seen into recognizable objects. The world is often perceived simultaneously as colors or incomprehensible sounds and as things which can be identified. Thus we can see Conrad's impressionist side which makes the things seem as they appear to a detached spectator who registers not perceptions but sensations.

The contrast of light and darkness in **Heart of Darkness** are used ironically to give greater effect on the meaning and on the reader. First of all the contrast of light and darkness polarizes the various conflicts and gives depth to the actions and provides dimension for the philosophies. At the first level, the contrast of these two colors symbolizes the conflict between the civilized world and the uncivilized Congo. In other words, the same imagery becomes associated with Kurtz and his Western aspirations for accomplishing great things both for himself and the world. At this point light and

darkness are representative of his success or failure in accomplishing his goal. His Western aspirations are dark in the sense that they were brutal. His failure was dark as he was not able to reach his goal. His only success comes at the end and it is the truth which is symbolized by darkness.

On the other hand, Conrad uses the images of light and dark to show the dual nature of man. At this point darkness becomes connotative of man potentially void of any concept of morality or of faith, truth, love, and accepted standards of conduct. Light becomes symbolic of that potentially high, somewhat idealized nature of man that properly recognizes moral values and abides by them. For this reason the civilization lived by the Europeans is symbolized by dark because it lacks truth, morality and it is materialistic. Conrad identifies real civilization directly with light, and the idealized concept of such a civilization suggested by this image is never diminished, although he, as the story progresses, points out that not all of the apparent, external glitter of civilization is gold.

From the first paragraphs of **Heart of Darkness** the light of civilization is overshadowed by dark air that symbolically hangs over the settlement of Gravesend and swallows up the town in mournful gloom. The meaning of the shadow soon becomes obvious as the real motives of the trading stations are examined. Behind the surface truth the real goal of these civilization bringers and humanizing agencies is to gain fame and to make money. They were robbers and murderers and the men who enter such pursuits are

blind- as it's very proper for those who tackle a darkness (35).

The position of these men of civilization is not anything different. Though they were sent to Congo with a meaningful task as to bring light and civilization, yet appearance is all it is, as in the position of white chief accountant who appears as a vision in

high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots (36).

The entire country with all its related aspects becomes a *place of darkness*, its heart, *the depths of darkness*. Marlow's first encounter with the place is enough to convince him of the nature of the Congo.

The black shapes and black shadows of disease and starvation lie confusedly in the greenish gloom..., the dark things..., the black people.... black fellows..., the black rags and black men (37).

set the symbolic atmosphere of the continent, which is later presented as a more overwhelming, profound darkness. In this observation Conrad ironically identifies colonial exploitation with darkness as the light is overshadowed by the introducers of civilization.

The darkness and light do not only represent the characters in the book but it is rather a self-examination of the dark potentialities of the entire human community, whether brightened with the real whiteness of civilization or obviously dark without pretense. The light and dark colors are the image of life with a shining surface and lightless depths. It is clearly understood that light represents the

glorified and idealized way of life, that is, civilization, whereas darkness represent the dark potentialities of man. In **Heart of Darkness**, they have an ironical meaning, in that darkness is the surface truth which only men with inner strength can accept and resist, and through this darkness one can reach light, in other words, one can survive by living up to standards imposed by the civilized society.

Conrad, throughout his book combines all the evil and good characteristics of the civilization and of the light and darkness, all of which have been symbolized in his two dominant characters, Kurtz and Marlow.

Kurtz is first taken as a respectable, aspiring young European because of his being earnest to accomplish his task of humanization and bringing civilization. As the story progresses the darkness of the civilization that he belongs to engulfs him up and he became a brute, hollow man. Slight hints by Conrad allows us to learn about this change ;

there were rumors that a very important station was in jeopardy, and its chief, Mr. Kurtz, was ill (38).

on the other hand the remark of the agent about Kurtz is much more ominous to indicate the position of Kurtz.

Kurtz is not long the emissary of pity, science and progress but also the emissary of ... devil knows what else (39).

It is understood that he was defeated by the darkness inside him and caused by the greedy and materialistic civilization overcame him. As he had no faith, he also lost his inner strength to fight against the evils. At last he became a hollow at the core because

for the faithless there can be no illumination (40).

He had fallen prey to the savage atmosphere of the wilderness and had assumed the primitive characteristics of the people there. Even his goal of bringing light couldnot evercome the darkness :

the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with his great solitude-and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core (41).

Thus Kurtz becomes a victim of the wilderness, or of his unconscious desires, when he is released from the social restrictions of organised society.

Though he was corrupted by the wilderness, Conrad presents Kurtz as a remarkable man, towards the end of the novel. He was remarkable because of his realisation of his self experience. At last he became aware of the evil behaviour and turned to truth. His last words,

The horror! The horror (42).

express his feelings about his attitudes and actions.

Better his cry-much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory (43).

These words told by Marlow show that in the test Conrad put Kurtz, the goal was achieved and Kurtz turned darkness into light through his self-realisation.

This self-realisation is valid on behalf of Marlow too. Marlow represent the light, the man loyal to his faith and his task. The test he experienced showed him the real face of civilization. Kurtz succumbs totally to the power of the wilderness and only emerges momentarily at the end to full awareness of his experience, whereas Marlow is forced to make a limited concession to the wilderness but preserves his moral being because he is not hollow at the core. He preserved his moral being because he had inner strength.

The irony that it was morally right for Marlow to make this concession is an essential ingredient of Conrad's view of life (43).

Finally, through Kurtz and Marlow and using light and dark imagery as symbols, Conrad tries to put forward that there is a dark side in every man which can be released through solitude. If man has faith and inner strength, he can be aware of this darkness and he can reach the truth. The truth is living up by the standards of a real civilization in which people are loyal to each other and to their task.

CONCLUSION

The wealth of interpretation arises from the symbolic force of **Heart of Darkness**. This is achieved through the great imaginative resonance of Conrad's style which makes him to be considered among modern writers.

In **Heart of Darkness**, we have tried to find out Conrad's understanding of civilization of his own time. As it is known, because of the improvements in science and in industry people in the 19.th. century became materialistic. They were in search for a wealthy life. For the sake of themselves, they abandoned their ties with humanly affairs and became greedy. In this study, it has been noted that Conrad was against the idea of Progress as he saw the results of it degenerating.

Conrad gives this degeneration symbolically. It is obvious that he criticizes the civilization depending on the idea of Progress. We noted that Conrad compares the civilized and uncivilized communities critically. This point is thought to be the central theme of the story. It is seen that the civilized European Society is considered to be living without being aware of their unhumane nature as they live up only the surface-truth. It is the surface truth because the reality is hidden in their ego. Their only aim is to gain fame and value in the eyes of others.

On the other hand the uncivilized bring the whites into contact with reality as the uncivilized natives possess a wild vitality, as natural and true as the surf, and they possess the value which have been

obliterated by European society. Coming into contact with these natives, the civilized without the artificial standards of their society, show their real face and become evil.

They become evil because the truth, that is symbolized by darkness, invades their reason and destroys their awareness of his individuality. So to know the darkness is to know the falsity of an artificial civilization. The condition that Kurtz reaches gives us this fact clearly. When he becomes aware of himself and the facts, he interprets his condition as **horror**.

The condition of Kurtz before reaching the truth is given symbolically by the image of darkness. This darkness is the truth as it brings out the things in the ego of Kurtz. What there is in his ego is the presentation of the civilization he belongs to. It is a civilization lack of morality, faith, truth, love and accepted standards of conduct, and all these are the necessities that have to be found for a humanly way of living. Thus it is understood that Conrad symbolizes the civilization, lack of any philanthropic standards with darkness while the idealized, potentially high nature of man recognizing the above values is symbolized by light.

In **Heart of Darkness** Conrad gives ironical meanings to the objects using symbols instead of them. Thus he uses a method of demystification to lead the reader to experience the story with a dreamlike and hallucinatory intensity, and to see the things as irreducibly strange, separated from their usual meaning. Light and dark images, the scenery along the river and Kurtz's being a representative of all the European society are all used symbolically with this purpose.

The aim of using such a device is to destroy in the reader his bondage to illusion and to give him a chance of reaching the truth and Conrad achieves this goal masterly.

Thus, it is concluded that Conrad, in **Heart of Darkness**, gives us the truth that the European civilization of the time was artificial in its being materialistic, imperialistic and nonmoral, faithless way of living. The only rescue of man is, according to him, to be loyal to his task. All these were the ideas and hypothesis reached by Conrad through experience;

*London and the mouth of the river Thames, the foam barred seashore of equatorial Africa, the Congo River meandering to the center of the mysterious black continent, to the heart of darkness ; all this, and the impression, doubly sinister, of the stupidity, hypocrisy and brutality of the seemingly civilized white man and of the repulsive and at the same time spellbinding barbarism of the black man; all of this and how much more yet, which constitutes, the strange and breathtaking atmosphere of **Heart of Darkness**; all this had been seen, felt, and lived by Conrad (45).*

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SUMMARY

In our study, we have tried to give Conrad's understanding of Civilization through his book **Heart of Darkness**. After a brief commentary on his place in English Literature, his understanding of civilization through the ideas of Progress and Decadence have been presented. We have reached the conclusion that Conrad saw the results of the idea of Progress frustrating.

In the following chapter the concept of Civilization in **Heart of Darkness** has been handled. Throughout his book, the civilization of the Europeans is given as a dark, evil-hearted one because of the materialistic, imperialistic and greedy ways of living of the people belonging to this civilization. The civilization is indicated as nothing more than an exploitation.

In the last chapter the problems as to why the civilization was identified by darkness, and what the meaning of this darkness are dealt with. The dark side of the civilization and of the men are given in a broader sense. Here the darkness appears to be the truth that noone wants to come face to face as it shows the bad sides of the people and artificial civilization.

On the other hand the light and dark imagery are tried to be explained with their symbolic meanings. Light is expressed as the real civilization with its people who are faithful and who have innate strength and can resist against the darkness.

Through his characters Marlow and Kurtz we come to the conclusion that people reveal their brutal instincts when they abandon the society and the standards of it. Kurtz had no innate strength, he had fallen prey into the savagery and became evil whereas Marlow by his fidelity to his task and by his innate strength could resist though they were both in solitude. So Conrad, making Kurtz a representative of all the Europeans, tried to show the civilization as overshadowed because of not being a real one but one only appearing as the surface artificial truth.