

SIGNIFICANT INCONGRUITIES IN CONRAD'S

HEART OF DARKNESS

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The question of a writer's historical affinities, says Macherey, is far from simple; it is complex and oblique. A writer's account of his age is never complete because of his individual and social involvement in the historical movement of his time, an involvement mediated by a specific ideology. The historical contradictions of the writer's age are not reflected in the work, they rather explain and account for the contradictions in the book which is neither homogeneous nor symmetrical. Its diversity and complexity are not those of totality but decentredness. The work is split "condemned to a stealthy or oblique relationship to itself". The mirror is not only selective but also partial. It does not only represent a fragmented reality for "the very image in the mirror is itself fragmented". It both reveals and conceals, it is partial and registers its own partiality. "The mirror in certain areas, is a blind mirror: but it is still a mirror for all its blindness". The split in the work, a conflict within the text reflected in the overall structure of the work, is symptomatic.¹ Theoretically this paper, a critical reassessment of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, draws rather heavily on Macherey's theory of literary production.

The White Man Burden...The White Man Guilt

"The title I am thinking of" wrote Conrad to William Blackwood in whose magazine the novel was to be published² "is The Heart of Darkness but the narrative is not gloomy. The crimina-

lity of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa is a justifiable idea".³

Conrad's initial project obviously was an anti-colonial text (the work was started as a short story then "it grew on him"). The idea was to uncover "the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern"⁴ and probably to exercise the nightmarish burden of his Congo experience through writing it down.

Ten years before Conrad had been engaged by Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut Congo. In 1880 he left to the Congo where he spent 6 months mostly as the skipper of a steamer going up the River Congo. He was physically sick and on the verge of a mental breakdown when he broke his 3 year contract on medical grounds and returned to Europe.

The blank spaces in Conrad's boyhood map of Africa, the objects of his childhood dreams, were now filled with a nightmarish reality. Conrad was to record his disillusionment in his essay "Geography and some Explorers".

A great melancholy descended on me. Yes, this was the very spot. But there was no shadowy friend to stand by my side in the night of the enormous wildness, no great haunting memory, but only the unholy recollection of a prosaic newspaper "Stunt" and the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration what an end to the idealized realities of a boy's daydreams! ⁵

In a sense Conrad's Heart of Darkness is an attempt to present the gap between the "civilizing idea" and the degrading reality. Marlow's reaction to his aunt's talk about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" is both sceptical and ironic: "there had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet".

(p.59)

The colonists, ironically referred to as the "pilgrims" were "lusty, red-eyed devils" (p.65.), "mean and greedy phantoms" (p.147.), a "gang of virtue" (p.79.). The Eldorado Exploring Expedition is a devoted band whose talk

was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage, there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, ... To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe. (p.87.)

The often quoted descriptive passage of the French man-of-war shelling the bush is particularly revealing:

It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts. Her ensign dropped limp like a rag, the muzzles of the long six-inch gun stuck out all

over the low hull, the greasy, slimy swell swung her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was incomprehensible firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech- and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives - he called them enemies! - hidden out of sight somewhere. pp. 61-62.

The high artistic quality of the passage has often been pointed out by critics but our concern here is the associations given in the passage to the acts of penetration and invasion as acts, not of grace as it was common in the public discourse of the period, but of violent imposition and protrusion. The penetration of darkness image is sustained with a modification with the effect of a reversal.⁶

Kurtz's cry "the horror, the horror", a cry which echoes Marlow's own reaction to his experience is the culmination of Marlow's trip to this underworld of violence and moral disintegration.

In this sense, the novel is a current ideological document. It is a "pierce" that is intended to be read with the glass of light, to save its population from savagery and exploitation.

Conrad's scholars often pointed out this aspect of the novel. "Heart of Darkness", writes Albert Guerard, "thus has its important public side, as an angry document, on absurd and brutal exploitation".⁷

Arnold Kettle describes the novel as "perhaps the most horrifying description of imperialism ever written".⁸ Cedric Watts says the novel "so vividly assails the hubris of imperialism and of civilized pretensions"⁹ and in one of the best and most recent studies of Conrad's work, I. A. Watt's, "Heart of Darkness and the Imperialist Ideology of the Novel".

But did Conrad really have an anti-imperialist ideology? And is Heart of Darkness a critique of Colonialism?

The Liberal Imperialist

If we accepted to view Conrad's Heart of Darkness as an anti-imperialist document exposing colonialist ideology how would we account for the image of Africans in the novel and the racial derogatory terms used in relation to them? In the narrative the Africans are savages "whose black rags were wound

round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails". p.64.

They were like ants (p.63.), "they crawled", they did not know restraint. "Restraint I would just as soon have expected from a hyena prowling among the corpses of a battlefield". (p.105.) "They were rudimentary souls" (p.119.), a sub-human species distantly related to the human whose language was a string "of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language". (p.146.) The African fireman was "an improved specimen... to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs". (p.97.)

And of all the Africans in the novel only one, a woman, is treated differently: "A wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman". (p.135.) "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent".

Under Conrad's eyes, Africans are horrifying phantoms, exploited savages, objects of pity, the embodiment of an elemental force which knows no restraint, and an exotic appeal.

It was Ian Watt, of all western critics of Conrad, who in a recent work pointed out Conrad's divided attitude to Imperialism. Ian Watt argues that Conrad's commitment to Britain, his adopted country brought him into conflict with his liberal sentiments. And while his attitude was different from Kipling, an outspoken apologist of imperialism, Conrad expressed his belief that liberty "can only be found under the English Flag all

over the world". Watt says that Heart of Darkness carries the same ideological contradictions. In the company's waiting room Marlow observes:

a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a red-good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I was not going into any of these. I was going in the yellow. Dead in the centre. (pp.55-56.)

The different colours on the map show the occupied territories by the European colonial powers, a colour for each. "The red of the British Empire", comments Ian Watt, "gets a pat, but there is no comment on the other colonizers until the purple patch of the German colonies in central Africa receives its contemptuously ironic kick".¹¹

At the turn of the century the colonial powers were fighting over Africa, the general political atmosphere was one of rivalry and of conflict.

The Belgian Congo, however, provided Conrad with a case where he could speak with absolute freedom, because it was neither British nor a threat to Britain's power in the world, and because the issues

involved went far beyond those of race.

The colony was ideal for another reason: unlike most others, it had been a conscious creation accompanied by a deafening international chorus mouthing the moral slogan of evolutionary political progress but in 1898 this chorus was attacking the savagery of that same Leopold whom, in 1890 Stanley had called the "Royal Founder of this unique humanitarian and political enterprise".¹²

Writing for Maga Blackwood's "respectable" Victorian magazine Conrad, "the spoilt and adopted child of Great Britain and even of the Empire"¹⁵ was not writing for an anonymous consumer. "One was in decent company there and had a good sort of public" Conrad wrote, "there is not a single club and messroom and man of war in the British Seas and Dominions which has not its copy of Maga".¹⁴

But what were the real terms of the implicit pact between producer and consumer, Conrad and his decent company?

Darkness as an Ideological Motif

"In Geography and Some Explorers" Conrad tells us of his long veneration for the European explorers of Africa and the Americas.

Men great in their endeavour and in hard won successes of militant geography, men who went forth

each according to his lights and with varied motives, laudable or sinful, but each bearing in his breast, a spark of the sacred fire.¹⁵

The Mungo Parks and Livingstones, explorers of parts of dark Africa, blank spaces on Conrad's boyhood map, were "worthy, adventurous and devoted men nibbling at the edges, attacking from north and south, consuering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there, and sometimes swallowed by the mystery their hearts were so persistently set on"¹⁶ (emphasis mine.)

Africa was dark in both the literal sense of mysterious and unknown and the figurative sense of evil, wicked, foul and devoid of spiritual light. It needed both to be discovered and saved by the sparkbearers of European civilization. Geographical exploration and colonization were the two faces of the same coin. "To pierce the darkness" of Africa was a common expression in the writings of the time.

Darkness was also associated with anarchy. The notion, deeply rooted in christian ideology had often been taken up by English and European writers.¹⁷ Africa, the Dark Continent, was the empire of chaos, the uncreated word to be given shape and meaning by the divine providence of the civilized Europeans (a Prospero-Caliban type of relationship). The white man's burden was to create Africa in his own image. The image of darkness in Conrad's narrative is not a creation of his own as much as it is an ideo-

logical motif which constitutes a theme in Western political and philosophic thought; a motif which Conrad was to transpose, exploit and modify in a process of artistic appropriation.

That Otherness

One of the essential reasons for the complexity of a literary work, says Pierre Macherey, is that,

the work never "arrives unaccompanied"; it is always determined by the existence of other works, which can belong to different areas of production. There is no first book independent and absolutely innocent, novelty and originality in literature as in other fields, are always defined by relationships. Thus, the book is always the site of an exchange: its autonomy and its coherence are bought at the price of that otherness, which can also be, on occasion, an alteration.¹⁸

Governed by its own laws, the book is autonomous, but never independent, its very existence depends on language which is neither independent nor innocent.

Marlow's trip, on board of a steamer to the "heart of darkness" was not only modelled on Conrad's experience in the Congo but also on the voyages of innumerable European explorers, and colonists to the "Dark Continent" or the "New Land". Like Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro, Mungo Park, Livingstone and Stanley,

Marlow's trip up the river Congo is that of a "worthy, adventurous and devoted" man set on "conquering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there".

Though concealed the presence of these explorers constitutes the narrative's eloquent silence and the history of its meaning. The brave conquistador exploring the newfound land is "that which endows meaning with a meaning".¹⁹ However Marlow's new found land belongs to the domain of the philosophical and psychological (a point which will be discussed later). "To face the darkness" (p.49.), which the Romans did, and to reach the "farthest point of navigation", like Kurtz, is, in spite of all atrocities involved, redeeming.

The conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only.

(p.51.)

The explorer in the colonizer redeems him. Conrad's Heart of Darkness is split into an exposure of colonial ideology and a loyalty to it.

The Myth of Origin

Like the theme of the island in 18th century European writings, Africa in Heart of Darkness is a presentation of

origins. In his brilliant analysis of Jules Verne's fiction Macherey writes,

The island as a theme is an ideological implement ... an instrument like all the other symbolic representation of origin: the child, the savage, the statue, the first man, the blind man. The presentation of origins also implies the special moment of rupture, the moment of loss of origins: the contrast, the education of the senses, education".²⁰

In Heart of Darkness the myth of origin is introduced by the first narrator in the first three pages of the novel. The reference to "the luminous space", "the luminous estuary", "the tranquil dignity" of "the venerable stream" which carried the memory of "the great knights-errant of the sea" acquires significance with Marlow's remark: And this also "has been one of the dark places of the earth". (p.48.) The theme is to be developed as the narrative unfolds. Britain, now luminous, was dark and the dignified Thames was, in a distant past, wild and untamed. The Romans "were men enough to face the darkness". (p.49.) Now Africa is Europe of yesterday, dark and savage it needs the European bearers of light. The Congo river "resembling an immense snake uncoiled" (p.52.) is the Thames origin and "the venerable stream" is the Congo's future. The Africans belong to the beginnings of time. The white man's encounter with them is an encounter with his own past.

We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of a profound anguish, and of excessive toil. (p.95.)

The inhabitants of the unknown planet, the Africans, howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity-like yours- the thought of your remote kinship with this mild and passionate uproar. p.96.

Conrad's presentation of origin in Heart of Darkness, however, is also an encounter between "civilized man", who lives under the protection of the social contract, and "the savage" his assumed past and origin. The encounter implies the dreadful recognition of the possibility of retrogression: atavism. The forest was both "appeal and menace". (p.81.) The Congo, coiled like a snake, is a temptation to a return to a state of nature: "An appeal to me in this fiendish row - is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice, too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced" says Marlow. (p.97.)

But in the absence of the bond of a community, the butcher and the policeman, man's only support against the temptation of the wilderness is "his own inborn strength". (p.97.) Kurtz as

well as the pilgrims, being hollow at the core, had nothing to fall upon. In the absence of the social contract and the community born of it, lack of restraint inevitably ends in retrogression and anarchy. In colonialist ideology the natives are not governed by any social contract nor are they possible partners in a binding contract.²¹

Heart of Darkness is deeply rooted in 19th century social Darwinism, anthropological thought and the Victorian belief in work, restraint and progress and its alter face, fear of retrogression and anarchy.

The Scandal

"The author wants to know and to judge".²² To know the author records what he has observed, to judge he inserts his own ideology. The two projects end up in two different utterances "the one expresses the lucid and the other the confused".²³

In his Congo trip Conrad witnessed the atrocities of the colonial situation which he later displayed in his novel. One utterance in Heart of Darkness is that which renders the inhuman treatment of the Congolese at the hands of colonizers who "were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men - men, I tell you". (p.65.) It is this fictional utterance which exposes the real basis of colonization: material profit admirably symbolized, in the narrative, by ivory.

Conrad also displays the demoralization and deterioration

of Europeans in Africa which he saw in the Congo. His judgement of this acquired knowledge, however, is not that the colonial situation (the laissez faire of human exploitation and material looting) produces the colonialist (a monster of human origin) but that an evil power lurking in the jungle has a dehumanizing effect. The land has "a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart".

(p.92.)

The junction between Conrad's distinct knowledge and his confused judgement is particularly obvious in Kurtz's character.

Kurtz, the monstrous colonizer, is half-English and half-French, he has a German name. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (p.117.). Like a typical colonizer he carries "the white man's burden", he is entrusted by the society for the suppression of savage customs to write a report for its future guidance (p.117.), a burden ironically opposed to his practice and to the note written in his own hand, "exterminate all the brutes!" Imperialist expansionism is admirably expressed by Kurtz's devouring ego "I saw him open his mouth wide-it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him." (p.134.) The scramble for loot of western capitalists will end up in Nietzsche superman paving the way for the notion of super-races, Nazism, Fascism and mass exterminations of World War II. The first utterance of the novel is prophetic, but the se-

second utterance claims that it was the power of correlative wilderness that turned Kurtz into what he became, "It had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating". (p.131.)

Conrad's display of the white colonizer as "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory" (p.134.) is both shrewd and prophetic. This is his fictional utterance. His judgement, however, which constitutes his ideological utterance is both confused and confusing. In the latter utterance Conrad, like Balzac's claim in Les Paysans that the rich are weak; they need protection,²⁴ makes the scandalous claim that the white colonizers are corrupted and demoralized by the powers of darkness lurking in the heart of Africa!

Mais après?

In a letter to R.B. Cunningham Graham dated February 8, 1899 Conrad writes.

I am simply in the seventh heaven to find you like the "H of D." so far. You bless me indeed. Mind, you do not curse me bye and bye for the very same thing. There are two more instalments in which the idea is so wrapped up in secondary notions that you-even you!- may miss it. And also you must remember that

I do not start with an abstract notion. I start with definite images and as their rendering is there some little effect is produced. So far the note struck chimes in with your convictions - mai après? There is an après.

Conrad's life-long friendship with Cunningham Graham, a distinguished socialist, had started in 1897 when he received a letter from him praising "An Outpost of Progress". Conrad was conscious that the source of his friend's admiration of the first instalment of Heart of Darkness was the anti-colonial theme. But the narrative had another theme which would, Conrad was almost sure, conflict with his friend's convictions. What was this theme "so wrapped up in secondary notions" that one was expected to miss? The letter, written mostly in French might help us find the answer. In it Conrad declines his friend's invitation to attend a "peace meeting", "I am not a peace man, not a democrat". He does not believe in fraternity, he tells his friend, nor in democracy which is but an illusion. Then he adds, switching to French:

L'homme est un animal méchant. Sa méchanceté doit être organisée. Le crime est une condition nécessaire de l'existence organisée. La société est essentiellement criminelle, ou elle n'existerait pas. C'est l'égoïsme qui sauve tout, absolument tout-tout ce que nous abhorrons, tout ce que nous aimons. Et

tout ce tient. Voilà pourquoi je respecte les extrêmes anarchistes - "Je souhaite l'extermination generale." Très bien. C'est juste et ce qui est plus, c'est clair.²⁵

Conrad's sceptical views concerning the nature of man and society were not the outcome of an outburst of anger or a moment of despair, they were convictions he expressed on several occasions. One year before he had written to Cunningham Graham telling him he was tragic with his courage and hopes and beliefs for "what's the profit?" "Every cause is tainted." His socialist friend's efforts were in vain because they were an attempt to reform not institutions but human nature "your faith will never move that mountain." Mankind was not bad, Conrad wrote, but it was silly, cowardly and cruel. Cruelty was a necessary condition for human existence.

... without it mankind would vanish ...

But will you persuade humanity to throw away sword and shield? Can you persuade even me - who write these words in the fulness of an irresistible conviction? No I belong to the wretched gang. We all belong to it. We are born initiated, and succeeding generations clutch the inheritance of fear and brutality without a thought, without a doubt, without compunction, in the name of God.²⁶

Marlow's recognition of this "inheritance of ... brutality" constitutes a bit of truth snatched from his exploration trip. The African scene is a fictional element necessary to play out Conrad's view of man's essential egotism and criminality. Marlow's moral world is shattered by his encounter with a real situation where the moral is no more essential than a garment. The encounter throws a new light on the huge edifice called progress and civilization.

Heart of Darkness displays a confrontation of two opposed strains. A typical 19th century belief in evolutionary progress, civilization, and an implied linear conception of history and a more 20th century European scepticism and nihilism. The conflict is not, as Ian Watt suggests, a conflict between Marlow and his standard Victorian values and Kurtz who embodies Conrad's "forebodings" at the outcome of "the accelerating changes in the scientific, political and spiritual view of the world".²⁷ It is rather an encounter between moral appearance and criminal reality, blindness and knowledge.

Marlow's lie to the Intended, is a conscious choice of a fig leaf to cover up Kurtz's nakedness. The Victorian will to believe is here echoed by Marlow's will to keep the illusion. Like Tennyson's resolution in "In Memoriam" ("And all is well tho' faith and form / Be sunder'd in the night of fear")²⁸, Marlow's is an evasion.

Statenated Game

In a letter dated December 27th 1897 Conrad conceives of existence as a huge self-created knitting machine which works incessantly with neither conscience nor consciousness.

It is a tragic accident, - and it has happened. You cannot interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you cannot even smash it ... It knits us in and knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions, - and nothing matters.²⁹

It is difficult not to connect the knitting machine in Conrad's letter to the two women knitting "feverishly" at the company's headquarters in Heart of Darkness; the slim one who walked at Marlow straight as if she did not see him "still knitting with down-cast eyes" and the fat one who glanced at him with swift and indifferent placidity and who seemed "uncanny and fateful".

Marlow often thought of these two women

guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinizing the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. Ave! Old knitter of black wool. Morituri te salutant. pp.55.57.

Like the knitting machine, the two women are indifferent and fateful, knitting people in and out of darkness. In this context the image of darkness does not only suggest the African unknown but the "unavoidable tragedy"³⁰ of existence in the cold of a mechanical universe. In such an existential situation man's ego becomes his own law and judge. One of the basic ironies of Heart of Darkness is that it is Marlow the upholder of the ideas of progress and morality who discovers "the néant", the existential darkness. He does not conquer darkness but discovers "the heart of a conquering darkness" (pp.155-156) which is only momentarily pushed back through work and organized communal existence. The darkness is both outside and inside, it is the cold unconcern of the universe and the criminal egotism of man.

The African darkness in Conrad's narrative is a screen on which the anxieties of a late 19th century European intellectual are projected. The journey to Africa turns to be an exploration of the "unquiet heart and brain"³¹ of imperialist Europe at the turn of the century. Conrad's divided self between scepticism and belief is one more expression of the "contradiction on the tongue"³² so typical of Victorian intellectuals, a contradiction which finds expression in the form of his novels. "The characteristic Conradian work is an exotic tale of action, richly and concretely rendered, on whose margins play a set of sceptical questions about the very reality of action itself".

While the tale is solid, writes Eagleton, it is thrown into doubt by meaning and questions which blur its contours. "The adventure story gives rise to a simple, solid specificity of action, which is in turn confronted with its corrosive negation"³³

This corrosive negation is achieved through Marlow's role as a narrator and the pattern of imagery. The "inconclusive" nature of Marlow's experience is stated right from the beginning. His way of telling what happened constantly affirms that things are ^{not} clear enough to be totally grasped.

The associations of dark and light/white imagery are subject to a reversal. The conquerers of darkness, bearers of the heavenly spark are struck blind by the land and "when the sun rose there was a white fog, very warm and clammy and more blinding than the night". (p.101.) They are represented by the blind-folded woman carrying a lighted torch in Kurtz' sketch. The metropolis, the very heart of the heavenly light of civilization, is white. Its colour, however, is that of cold death³⁴, it makes Marlow think "of a whited sepulchre" (p.55.), this "white cemetery" is opposed to the mysterious life which stirs in the forest.

In "A Note on the Play of Poetical Allusions in Heart of Darkness"³⁵, Witold Chwalwick points out Conrad's use of Gospel motives in his narratives. "Whited sepulchre", says Chwalwick, is quoted from Matthews and alludes to it:

Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!
for you are like whited sepulchres, which indeed

appear beautiful outward, but are indeed full of
dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Like a whitened sepulchre the city's apparent innocence covers a horrifying reality. Marlow's deep consciousness of the discrepancy alienates him. However, his lie to the Intended is a willful choice of the illusion: "I would not tell her. It would have been too dark - too dark altogether". (p.162.) The "whitened sepulchre", however ugly, is to Marlow more bearable than the horror of scattered "dead men's bones". Marlow's words, his last in the novel, are a crystallization of the work's necessity, the meeting point of different lines in the narrative: the colonial enterprise its appearance and reality man's essential criminality and his social pretence, and the option to keep up the illusion in spite of the acquired knowledge. With Marlow's lie "everything seems to be left exactly as it was".³⁶ Marlow might hate and detest a lie because it bears "a taint of death", it makes him "miserable and sick". (p.82.) But he lies and his lie is deemed necessary to go on. "Stalemate games are in one way unachieved, in another way complete; the world goes on, and this is at once the question and the answer of the text".³⁷ Marlow's acquired insight is covered up again. To keep up the illusion, for Conrad the liberal imperialist, is a survival necessity.

Recapitulation

Behind Conrad's Heart of Darkness one detects the shadow of the Worthy Explorer who attacks and conquers "snatching a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there". Both Kurtz and Marlow are modelled on him. Like him they reach "the farthest point of navigation", unexplored regions of human behaviour and consciousness. Kurtz steps in, partakes of the horror of human egotism and criminality. Marlow is very nearly buried but succeeds to "draw back his hesitating foot". (p.151.) In spite of all atrocities involved, Kurtz's exploration and glimpsed truth make him "a remarkable man". He is an explorer and appropriator of new terrains of human experience. The Colonialist Explorer in Heart of Darkness constitutes the novel's eloquent silence. The relation between this silent shadow outside the text and Marlow's adventure story helps to explain the novel's complexity as an autonomous work which while having a logic of its own remains a second reality dependent on historical reality. It is dependent in the sense that it never breaks loose and not in the sense that it reflects historical reality as it is. Conrad transposes the Explorer, exploits him and modifies him. His field of exploration is the intellectual worries and forebodings of European bourgeois intellectuals at the turn of the century. But more important is the fact that while the explorer exploited his new found land turning into a settler or colonizer, Conrad's Kurtz dies after summing up his experience as "the horror!" and Marlow