



## Heart of Modernism: Unveiling Joseph Conrad's Influence

## Cœur du Modernisme: Analyse de l'Influence de Joseph Conrad

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## Abstract

The present study delves into the profound influence of Joseph Conrad's iconic work, *Heart of Darkness*, on the emergence of Modernism in the art of writing fiction. By closely examining Conrad's masterful storytelling techniques, this study uncovers the pivotal role the novella played in shaping the trajectory of literary Modernism during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through a stylistic analysis, the study explores Conrad's adept use of impressionism and symbolism, unveiling how the principles of these artistic movements contributed to the novel's depth and complexity. By shedding light on Conrad's narrative innovations, this research uncovers the visionary methods that continue to resonate with modern writers and readers alike. Fundamentally, the study offers an illuminating exploration of Joseph Conrad's enduring influence and his enduring legacy in the world of literature.

## Article info

## Received

05/08/2023

## Accepted

01/10/2023

**Keywords:**

- ✓ Joseph Conrad;
- ✓ *Heart of Darkness*;
- ✓ Modernism;
- ✓ influence;
- ✓ impressionism and symbolism;
- ✓ narrative technique;
- ✓ stylistic analysis

## Résumé

La présente étude explore l'influence profonde de l'œuvre emblématique de Joseph Conrad, *Cœur des ténèbres*, sur l'émergence du modernisme dans l'art d'écrire de la fiction. En examinant de près les techniques magistrales de narration de Conrad, cette étude met en lumière le rôle crucial que la nouvelle a joué dans la formation de la trajectoire du modernisme littéraire à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> et au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. À travers une analyse stylistique, l'étude explore l'utilisation habile par Conrad de l'impressionnisme et du symbolisme, révélant comment les principes de ces mouvements artistiques ont contribué à la profondeur et à la complexité du roman. En mettant en évidence les innovations narratives de Conrad, cette recherche dévoile les méthodes visionnaires qui continuent de résonner auprès des écrivains et des lecteurs contemporains. Fondamentalement, l'étude offre une exploration éclairante de l'influence durable de Joseph Conrad.

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- ✓ influence ;
- ✓ impressionnisme et symbolisme ;
- ✓ techniques narratives ;

## 1. Introduction

Literary language foregrounds language itself as something not reducible to meaning: it opens as well as closes the disparity between symbol and idea, between written sign and assigned meaning (Hartman, 1979, p. viii).

*Heart of Darkness* is considered one of the most controversial novels of the modern era. Breaking most of the previous rules and conventions, the novel marks a transformation in the art of novel writing. Though written during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the novella carries many Modernist traits, which constitute its indeterminacies, its epistemological uncertainties and its mythic logic (Poole, 2009, p. 297). Conrad's innovation in both style and technique accredits his writings in general and *Heart of Darkness* in particular, for the Modernist novel and the Great Tradition.

In effect, *Heart of Darkness* is a turning point in English literature in general and the development of the novel in particular. As a result, Conrad has become one of the most influential Modernist prose stylists. He is a prolific writer with a determined devotion to his art. Though English was his third language, his rich store of exotic experiences as a merchant sailor helped him write many of his novels, namely, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911).

Nevertheless, *Heart of Darkness* remains Conrad's most acclaimed and ambiguous work he wrote as the British Empire was in its heyday. The novella tells the story of a British sailor called Marlow who travels up the River Congo to find Mr Kurtz, a trader in ivory. In the Congo, a country in central Africa, Marlow discovers the bitter reality of the mysterious Mr Kurtz, who succumbed to darkness becoming a ruthless man. Hence, the choice of Africa as a setting to Marlow's story as well as the novella's misty narrative impressionistic style led to varied interpretations and aroused many a response.

Conrad's conception of his role as an artist is emphasised in his apostrophe to the reader in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*,

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 (Conrad, 1963, pp. xi-ii).

Thus, Conrad's view of literature as a verbal art, the power of the word, stresses the use of language and storytelling to dramatize observed actions. His dramatization of the visible world is also manifest in a letter to his publisher William Blackwood claiming that *Heart of Darkness*,

[...] is not an endless analysis of affected sentiments but in its essence it is action [...] nothing but action – actions observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute truth to my sensations (which are the

basis of art in literature) – action of human beings that will bleed to a prick, and are moving in a visible world (Conrad, 1979, p. 468).

Consequently, Conrad conceives of the word and the image as complementary means of representation and denotation. He combines the abstracting powers of the word with the immediacy of the image to write his sombre and gloomy novels. The power between word and sight, sound and colour, voice and gesture, form and substance is a stylistic trait of Conrad's novels.

Therefore, writing fiction is a symbiotic telling and showing activity, in which verbal and visual modes of representation collaborate to stimulate the reader into active and productive reading (Acheraïou, 2009, p. 82). For fiction to be successful as an art it must, in Conrad's opinion, appeal to the senses: sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Therefore, Conrad's narrative discourse has long been identified with impressionism, a term used to describe works of literature in which a few selected details suffice to convey the sensory impressions of an incident or an event. Impressionism, the first truly modern movement in all the arts because of its stress on fidelity to sense impressions, is connected everywhere in the literary world with the name of Joseph Conrad.

Nevertheless, Conrad never considered himself an impressionist. His name became associated with the movement only after his death, when Ford Madox Ford, in several critical essays, claimed that the chief literary impressionists of his time were Conrad, Henry James, and Stephen Crane (Hay, 1975, p. 137). The artist thus becomes a seer whose supreme aim is to reveal the truth as it appears to him (Schneider, 2009, p. 98).

Henry James wrote in "The Art of Fiction" that a novel is, "in its broadest sense, a direct impression of life" (James, 1970, p. 383). It is an allegorical painting in which Marlow narrates his visual experiences in the heart of darkness. There, Marlow observes scenes of "merry dance of death and trade" (*HD*, 20) that he likened to "a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares" (*HD*, 17). These descriptions of sensory oppositions are typical of Conrad's style wherein the intensity of first impressions is at its utmost (Vinson, 2011, p. 67).

Throughout the novella, Conrad employs an array of narrative techniques typical of impressionism, modernism and the literature of *fin de siècle*. His emphasis on form is an attempt to make Marlow's sensory perceptions visible to the reader (Hervouet, 1990, p. 191). Nonetheless, the meaning of Marlow's account of his experiences in the wilderness is obscured by his hazy and hypnotic narrative style. The frame narrator asserts that the meaning of *Heart of Darkness* "[is not] inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze" (*HD*, 8). Hence, the novella's unintelligibility is due partly to its reliance on the frame narrative voice – a story within a story. Just like the novella's meaning, Marlow is invisible. To his auditors, he is no more than a voice. "[S]itting apart" (39) in the dark night air, he is consumed by darkness, completely obsessed with the strains of the untellable tale, by the darkness of his own memory. He becomes more remote, more exotic, more disturbing and no more than a voice (Reeves, 1985, p. 288). As a result, the use of the frame narrative voice triggers uneasiness and ambiguity and epitomises the complexity of meaning making.

Therefore, critics seem not to agree on this quality of Conrad's writings. F. R. Leavis, for instance, saw Conrad's adjectival insistence as a stylistic "flaw" which serves to "muffle" rather than "magnify" the meaning behind the novella (Leavis, 1962, pp. 196-7). Achebe, too, does not

consider the vagueness and impressionism as a stylistic flaw, but rather sees it as an evasion of a more direct denouncement of racism and imperialism (Achebe, 1978, p. 9). Nevertheless, neither intrusive nor evasive in its adjectival insistence, and in its disparate voices, the novella's multiple meanings dramatize the complexities, in the events themselves and in Marlow's changing responses to them, and make of the simplistic adventure story a profound moral tale of Modernism and the Great Tradition.

Thus, Conrad's impressionistic narrative discourse in *Heart of Darkness* renders meaning nebulous and undecidable. Deconstructionists desire that no work endorses a single meaning or message, and a variety of interpretations can accurately apply. Conrad's use of the adjective "unspeakable", for instance, puts the reader's shoulders to the wheel trying to decode meaning. The adjective occurs three times in the novella in which meaning is fundamentally incomprehensible. The unspeakable rites that led to the disintegration of Mr Kurtz are unclear,

But 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 up to him, do you understand? – to Mr. Kurtz himself (*HD*, 71).

Such impressions of midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites lead us to see the degree of indeterminacy in Conrad's narrative discourse in *Heart of Darkness* and to question its effects on the reception and interpretation of the novella.

## 2. The *Zeitgeist* of the Era: *Fin de Siècle*, *Fin du globe*

"Fin de Siècle," murmured Lord Henry.

"Fin du globe," answered his hostess.

"I wish it were fin du globe," said Dorian with a sigh.

"Life is a great disappointment" (Wilde, 1891, p. 205).

The last decade of the nineteenth century known as the *fin de siècle* was a period of cultural vigour and aesthetic productivity of Europe coupled with decadence, *ennui* and apocalyptic gloom (Mousoutzanis, 2014, p. 19). Though marked by an age of industrial, scientific, and technological boom, this *bell époque* announced the death of the Absolute and put under scrutiny the traditionally held beliefs about the universe. It is an unprecedented era of social, political, epistemological, as well as philosophical crises.

In addition to the different difficulties that faced the Empire abroad, Britain's internal affairs underwent social, political and economic problems. This was the decade when Britain was troubled by political agitation as well as urgent violent demands for the improvement of the social conditions of the working class. Trade unions revolted against the government asking for higher wages and better working conditions. These social and political problems were ensued by an economic crisis owing to a decrease in growth rate, exports, and agriculture. Thus, the political, social, and economic situation of Britain by the *fin de siècle* threatened the future of the supreme world power.

Furthermore, the epistemological scientific crisis began with Charles Darwin's theory of Natural Selection. In his work, *The Origin of Species* (1859), Charles Darwin (1809-1882) postulated that individuals within a species compete for survival. His theory contested the

commonly held views concerning the origin of the earth and of human beings (Peters, 1996, p. 28). The earth, he asserted, was thus several millions of years older than most Christians believed; and human beings were the descendants of monkey. As a result, Darwin's revolution influenced many other fields of science and announced the emancipation of secular reason from revelation.

Sigmund Freud (1856- 1939), on the other hand, revolutionized the field of psychology through his theories of the unconscious mind, the defence mechanism of repression, dreams, and psychoanalysis. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow concludes that "the mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in it, all the past as well as the future" (*HD*, 52). Moreover, the epoch of the turn of the century witnessed Lord Kelvin's discovery of the Second Law of Thermodynamics and Charles Lyell's geological revolution. These new scientific developments yielded a sense of acute epistemological uncertainty (Vulcan, 1991, p. 12). As a result, the new cosmology became an immediate presence in the narrative.

Besides, the era was also marked by another crisis in the philosophical milieu led by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Schopenhauer's ideas of scepticism and pessimism influenced Conrad's thinking and temperament. His *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) greatly enhanced *fin de siècle* degeneration. Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, in his work, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), did not hesitate to express his existentialist attitude of *ennui* and proclaim that for all intents and purposes God is dead (Bala, 1990, p. 22). These changes that swept man's view of the universe in the nineties is expressed in one of Conrad's letters to Cunninghame Graham in 1897 comparing the universe to an impersonal machine,

There is a – let us say – a machine. It evolved itself out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! – it knits. [...] It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the allusions – and nothing matters (Conrad, 2011, pp. 56-7).

Last but not least, the *fin de siècle* era paved the way to an aesthetic crisis directly related to the role of the artist. The era's *zeitgeist* prompted the shift from the Victorian to the modern. Art, exiled into the realm of the merely symbolic and banished from the serious business of "real life" into the realm of entertainment, no longer infuses reality with meaning or recreates it as it once had done (Vulcan, 1991, pp. 13-21).

This shift from the real to the symbolic, from objective to subjective, was represented by Decadence, Aestheticism and the Gothic novel. Decadents, like Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), believed that all art is immoral, and used the slogan of "art for art's sake" to stress the aesthetic values over the social, moral, and political themes in literature, fine arts, and music. Moreover, Conrad's dramatization of Marlow's journey in *Heart of Darkness* expressed his fears that the accelerating changes in the political, scientific, and spiritual view of the world during the last decades of the nineteenth century were preparing unsuspected terrors for the new (Watt, 1980, p. 148).

### 3. Transforming the Art of Fiction Writing

Conrad's art in *Heart of Darkness* can be located in the contexts of Realism, Modernism, Impressionism and Symbolism. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad heralded many writers in the

transition from the real to the symbolic, from the objective to the subjective and from the Victorian to the Modern. Though written in the late nineteenth century, the novella is considered as a preface to Modernism.

To place Conrad in his literary context, one must consider his debt to the French and Jamesian nineteenth-century Realist tradition, as well as his later anticipation of and connection to the twentieth-century Modernist one (Graham, 1996, p. 207). Conrad's admiration for Balzac, Flaubert, and Maupassant is clear in his advocacy of dramatizing "action observed," "in its essence [my work] is action [...] action observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute truth to my sensations" (Aubry, 1927, p. 418).

Thus, Conrad's artistic dramatization of the visible observable world, expressed in his Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, stems from Maupassant's impressionistic elements. From Flaubert, Conrad took the idea of the novel as a laboriously shaped work of art as well as his programme of restrained objective realism. Therefore, a writer portrays objectively the reality behind the facts as perceived by the eye. "The writer," advised Flaubert, "should be like God: present everywhere, nowhere visible" (Najder, 1987, p. 20).

Besides, Conrad also developed a close intimacy with Henry James, his "greatest disciple", from whom he learned the last secrets of the novelist's craft (Watt, 1980, pp. 202-03). This restrained objective Realism also points forward to some Modernist aspects. Its aim for detachment was greatly mirrored in the Imagists' focus on the objective image. Another modernist trait present in Conrad's fiction is his narrative intricacy through the use of internal narrators, narrative obliquity and distancing, and the technique of impersonality to provide a multiplicity of viewpoints that will conceal the artist yet express his Nietzschean sceptical view of the world's fragmentation and lack of fixed meaning. These new narrative elements are also manifest in the works of Ford Madox Ford, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot (Graham, 1996, p. 207).

Modernism is known for its formal experimentation as well as its concern for larger philosophical issues. In fiction, formal experimentation took a number of forms: achronological narratives, multiple narrators, stream-of-consciousness narration, fragmented narratives, inconclusive endings, and unreliable narrators (Peters, 1996, p. 28). Conrad's innovation in formal experimentation was proclaimed in his "make see" aesthetic credo which was delivered in his 1896 Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* Maria Dabrowska noted that "not with Proust but with Conrad began the writer's struggle to break the conventions of the novel" (Gillon, 1960, p. 16). It is noteworthy that these new narrative elements mirrored the general ideological crisis of the late nineteenth century (Watt, 1980, p. 168).

Thus, Modernist writers were representing in form what they perceived in life. That is, the fragmented forms employed by these authors were meant to resemble the fragmented world they encountered (Peters, 1996, p. 32). It is a view of life as a text (Vulcan, 1991, p. 6). The major achievements of literary Modernism include Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and other works such as Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913), T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) (Graham, 1996, p. 203).

Besides, the philosophical issues which were recurrent in Modernist literature included its insistence on the futility of life in an indifferent universe, its transcendental view of the world, its alienation of modern man, its epistemological ambiguity and indeterminacy, and its emphasis on conceptions of the Self. These traits are actually the result of the atmosphere of uncertainty concerning traditionally held truths that arose late in the nineteenth century (Peters, 1996, p. 32). It was in fact the human hollowness which Marlow shared with the pilgrims which led T. S. Eliot to use the famous announcement of "Mistah Kurtz – he dead" (*HD*, 100) as the epigraph for *The Hollow Men* (1925) presenting Kurtz as a symbol for the faithlessness and inner emptiness of the modern world in general (Watt, 1980, p. 234).

Modernist texts also opened new gates on a world haunted by horror. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* predicted the eclipse of Western civilization, which later witnessed the Great War (1914) as well as Francis Ford Copula's film, "Apocalypse Now" (1979) (Graham, 1996, p. 214). Thus, Kurtz's last pronouncement of horror, used as Eliot's epigraph to *The Waste Land* (1922), was but a verdict on the essential wickedness of man and his ultimate ruin (Watt, 1980, p. 236).

Last but not least, Modernism could have hardly existed without the great contribution of Sigmund Freud. He heralded many of the twentieth-century cultural obsessions. His emphasis on the divided self, on the striving, lustful, anarchic "Id" seeking fulfilment notwithstanding the countervailing pressure of the ego or super-ego, had been anticipated in the depiction of Kurtz's fierce gratifications in the Congo (Watts, 2008, p. 25). Freud's writings, from *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) through *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1920) influenced many Modernist writers namely Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence. These writers employed and developed many Freudian concepts and techniques in their works such as stream of consciousness and dream-effect to "make us see" the individual's subjective life. All in all, Freud's profound impact on Modernist writers was depicted in W. H. Auden's *In Memory of Sigmund Freud* (1939): "To us he is no more a person/ Now but a whole climate of opinion/ Under whom we conduct our differing lives" (Auden, 2006, p. 510).

#### 4. The Fusion between Impressionism and Symbolism

Words, groups of words, words standing alone, are symbols of life, have the power in their sound or their aspect to present the very thing you wish to hold up before the mental vision of your readers (Conrad, 1899, p. 280).

Impressionism, a movement which arose in the 1860s, was a particularly vital movement to Conrad's work. It marked the decisive transition from trying to portray what all men know to trying to portray what the individual actually *sees*. Perhaps the most distinctive quality of Conrad's own writing is its strong visual sense. Conrad's insistence in his Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that art depended for its success on an "impression conveyed through the senses," (Conrad, 1963, p. x) was wholly consistent with Impressionist method. Though Conrad did not associate himself with Impressionism, it was Ford Madox Ford who gave wide currency to the view that Conrad, James and Crane, like Flaubert and Maupassant, had been influenced by the movement (Watt, 1980, p. 172).

In addition, the Symbolist movement was very crucial in the development of Conrad's art in *Heart of Darkness*. In its simplest terms, symbolism involved a process whereby particular events or objects were assigned some larger, nonliteral meaning. The symbolic meaning of objects and events is established through the expansion of their inherent properties (Watt, 1980, p. 199). As such, *Heart of Darkness* belongs to a specifically symbolic tradition of fiction, and it is the only one of Conrad's novels which does (Watt, 1980, p. 188).

In his book, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, Ian Watt divided signification into two types: "centripetal" and "centrifugal." Drawing upon Conrad's nut analogy, Watt pointed out that the "centripetal" signification is typical of seamen's yarns wherein the story, the narrative vehicle, is the shell, the larger outside sphere which encloses a smaller sphere, the inner kernel of truth. Readers of the yarn are invited to seek inside it for a central core of meaning.

On the other hand, in the "centrifugal" signification, that is characteristic of Marlow's tales, the relation of the spheres is reversed. The narrative vehicle is the smaller inside sphere. Its function is merely to make the reader go outside it in search of a circumambient universe of meanings which are not normally visible, but which the story, the glow, dimly illuminates. This is made even clearer by the frame narrator's passage,

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical [...], and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine (*HD*, 8).

The outer sphere of larger meaning, then, is presumably larger and infinite, since, unlike the husk of a nut, the haze lacks any ascertainable circumference. It is noteworthy that many of the characteristics of Modernist literature can be seen as the result of the convergence of the symbolist and impressionist traditions. Indeed, both the Avant-guard and the Imagist movements of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were but developments of the symbolist and impressionist movements for their fundamentally symbolic tendencies. Ezra Pound expressed this in his ringing polemic affirmation when he defined his literary objective, the image, as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time, the natural object is always the adequate symbol" (Pound, 1968, p. 4).

## 5. Conrad's Narrative Style

Conrad's main technical innovation in *Heart of Darkness* is his adoption of the framed narrative voice. The mediating narrative voice, actually always present, vanishes and we feel that we are left in absolute solitude with Charles Marlow. Marlow functions, not only as an intradiegetic narrator and a protagonist of the story but also as a distancing device (Lothe, 1996, p. 166). This distancing quality of Marlow gives *Heart of Darkness* an aesthetic validity. Conrad's framed narrative reflects the death of the traditional simple narratives where the frame narrator is often the most authoritative and knowledgeable of the narrators. *Heart of Darkness*, however, is different. Although the frame narrator opens the narrative and further introduces us to Marlow, his vision is so limited compared



to Marlow's. Therefore, Marlow is the objective correlative of the story. *Heart of Darkness* dramatizes Marlow's narrative style as the ultimate theme of the novella.

In addition to the use of multiple narrators, the study expounds on the narrative technique of the delayed decoding. In his narrative discourse, Conrad employs the cart-before-horse method. It is the verbal counterpart of the impressionist painter's effort to render perceivable sensation instantaneously. It combines the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning (Watt, 1980, p. 175-6).<sup>16</sup> The ultimate decoding of meaning creates dramatic irony. As such, the delayed decoding technique is very crucial in decoding darkness. In the *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow sees his helmsman quickly fall and stretch on the deck; he then infers that the man has seized a cane and over-balanced at a most inappropriate time, and finally at the third stage Marlow recognises late that the man is slain by a thrown spear (*HD*, 64, 66).

Conrad's narrative discourse is also characterised by the art(ifice) of covert plots. The novella weaves together different quests which would unquestionably make readers feel that some narrative enigma has been set into the fabric of the narrative and left unexplained. Decoding the covert plot would enable the reader to see the narrative as artful and suspenseful in exposition, themes richer in presentation, and the work more ironic (Watts, 1984, p. 44).

In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz and Marlow are deemed to be victims of covert plotting. The former fails to see the Company's manager's conspiracy against him; and Marlow in turn is slow to unveil the story's narrative obliquities which would ultimately lead to the reader's confusion. The manager's motivation to destroy Kurtz is ambition. Kurtz, an influential and remarkably successful ivory-hunter, is the manager's main rival for promotion. The manager, thus, succeeds in delaying Kurtz's relief from the Inner Station by wrecking Marlow's steam-boat. He further defers Marlow's request for rivets to repair the steam-boat for three months. Marlow's rescue operation fails and Kurtz dies during the journey downstream. Marlow seems to be gradually recognising the extent of the manager's Machiavellism and political Darwinism planning ruthlessly to delay Kurtz's rescue mission who in turn represents a threat to their ambitions.

I did not see the real significance of that wreck at once. I fancy I see it now, but I am not sure, not at all. Certainly the affair was too stupid, when I think of it, to be altogether natural (*HD*, 30).

As such, Marlow himself was fundamentally a victim of the manager's cruel plan. The main reason is that the narrative employs first-person narration: the hero is also the story-teller, so that the reader, looking through his eyes or at least over his shoulder, must largely share the hero's unawareness or bewilderment. Hence, the delayed decoding of the covert plot by the narrator would unarguably lead to its delayed decoding by the reader.

In addition, *Heart of Darkness* dramatizes the paradox of the virtue of evil. This is quite apparent in the "strange commingling of desire and hate," (*HD*, 101) which Marlow records in his reflective account of Kurtz's last cry. This paradoxical nature Conradian narrative is similar to his Faustian counterpart. Thus, the metaphysical covert plots of *Heart of Darkness* and *Doctor Faustus* dramatize Mr Kurtz and Dr Faustus as souls for sale for both protagonists make a bargain for their souls with the devil.

Still another stylistic technique employed by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* is that of The Haunting Doppelgänger. The story epitomised the ghastly symbioses of Marlow and Kurtz as pursuer and pursued respectively. Marlow says about Kurtz, “and it is not my own extremity I remember best [...] No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through” (*HD*, 101).

Conrad also employs symbolism which is one of the main features of Modernism. His symbolist tinge is clear from the beginning of the novella. Marlow’s journey to the heart of darkness can be read as a journey into the Dark Continent, the self, the underworld, civilisation, or most plausibly as a “journey” in the failure of language to interpret Kurtz’s experience at the heart of darkness. Besides, the symbolic dualism of light/darkness and white/black is maintained throughout the novel. Conrad’s narrative dismantles the stereotypical contrast between black as bad and white as good through the depiction of London, the centre of the mighty empire, as also capable of embracing darkness. Marlow tells us that, Britain —has been one of the dark places of the earth (*HD*, 7).

Last but not least, this chapter examines Conjecture, Estrangement and Distancing. Conrad’s use of the different words of estrangement such as as if, seem, appear, as and like is manifest throughout the novella. “As if” locution introduces adverbial clauses indicating comparison with some hypothetical circumstances. It has an evident bias towards conjecture and guessing. In modalisations with seem and appear, the narrator withdraws into a distance and leaves it to the reader to pass judgement on a particular act, event, or character at a particular moment. Therefore, the character and the reader are faced with appearances and subjective sense impressions. These modalisations remain to the end inconclusive, behind the veil of darkness. Similes with like and as obscure meaning for they compare something dark to something darker.

Marlow’s comments on the African coast reflect his state of mind at the beginning of the journey. The coast continues to arouse his curiosity, “the coast looked the same, as though we had not moved” (*HD*, 19) and “the formless past bordered by dangerous surf, as if Nature herself had tried to ward off intruders” (20). In these three examples, the “as if” locutions provide visual images of the coast as well as an account of how these visual images affect Marlow (Senn, 1980, p. 160).

The following are instances of outward description of observed events and attitudes whose significance is imperfectly apprehended from their external manifestations and therefore invites speculation:

They did not seem aware; the elder man [...] seemed very vexed; the two fellows there seemed astounded; a gesture that [...] seemed to beckon [...] a treacherous appeal; the man did not seem capable of a whisper (*HD*, 44, 45, 46, 47, 86).

All these examples from *Heart of Darkness* summon conjecture from the part of the reader.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has expounded on the impressionistic, symbolist, and modernist features manifest in *Heart of Darkness*. It analysed the different representations of word, voice, sight, light, sound, gesture and colour which make the narrative cinematic. The study has also revealed that the white fog images represent the impossibility of attaining epistemic truth. The

visible facts of the story are obscured by the frequent images of mist and shadow, what Marlow called the haze, the impenetrable adjectives as well as the different personifications of the darkness and the wilderness.

As a result, we conclude that *Heart of Darkness* is much more than just a story about a voyage up the river. It is an exploration of good and evil, light and darkness, black and white, sanity and insanity. It is above all about the essential hollowness at the core of humanity and language.

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