

Växjö University
School of Humanities
Supervisor: Karin Möller

END 184
(61-80 p.)
Spring 2001

Animal Imagery and
Religious Symbolism in
Joseph Conrad's
"HEART OF DARKNESS"

RAMONA ANTTONEN

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to investigate how Joseph Conrad has used animal imagery and religious symbolism in “Heart of Darkness,” and determine if these tools are somehow linked to the theme of the story. Close reading has been applied in order to be able to go through the entire story in search of these often well-hidden tools. Considering the fact that the story in focus of the analysis is believed by some, including myself, to be a long short story rather than a short novel, this method of approach has proved to be highly useful. First a discussion about a possible theme in “Heart of Darkness” is presented, followed by a brief comment on Conrad’s personal life philosophy and view on the use of symbolic devices in literary works. In order to determine the differences between symbols and imagery, as well as theme, subject and topic, a short discussion of terminology has been included.

Much of the discussion in the analysis relies heavily upon articles and books by critics who have focused exclusively on symbolism and imagery in “Heart on Darkness” and other works by Conrad. The scholarly names worth mentioning in connection with the discussion about animal imagery are Olof Lagercrantz, John A. Palmer, and Samir Elbarbary. The critics Anthony Fothergill and Cedric Watts explore religious symbolism in general, whereas P.K. Saha and Rita A. Bergenholtz focus on particular aspects of it, such as Buddhism and Greek mythology.

The analysis section is for the most part a combination between my own personal interpretations of “Heart of Darkness” and those made by others. It is divided into two major sections, Animal Imagery and Religious Symbolism. The latter, furthermore, comprises two subgroups. The conclusion suggests that Conrad used symbolism and imagery as narratological tools in order to present us with the theme of morality in the story.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. AIM AND SCOPE	6
3. APPROACH AND MATERIAL	6
4. TERMINOLOGY	9
5. ANALYSIS	11
5.1. ANIMAL IMAGERY	11
5.2. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM	18
5.2.1. <i>Marlow: Friend or Foe?</i>	18
5.2.2. <i>The Knitting Women and the Buddha Gestures</i>	27
6. CONCLUSION	32
7. WORKS CITED	36

1. INTRODUCTION

You might ask before going into the actual analysis if there really is a need for doing yet another study, among the hundreds that already exist, of the famous story about Marlow and Kurtz in the jungles of the Congo. In my opinion, there is. Up to this date, I believe that too much of the discussion about this story has dealt with the questions of colonialism and racism, which, understandably, are easy to focus on, considering where and when the action is set. Nevertheless, there are so many other qualities to this story that need to be emphasised.

When it comes to the question of narration, i.e. how the story is told, not many critics have looked at anything else than the use of several narrators and one unreliable narrator in “Heart of Darkness.” Conrad himself, however, wrote in a letter to a friend that he feels strongly about symbolism in literature, that, indeed, “All the great creations of literature have been symbolic, and in that way have gained in complexity, in power, in depth and in beauty” (qtd in Yelton 16). Of course, some scholars have focused exclusively on the topic of symbolism over time, but the vast majority of these analyses deal with comparing classical novels to “Heart of Darkness.”

This short story is often interpreted as a hero’s initiation and his journey into the underworld, as Sudarsan Rangarajan tells us (1). Undertones from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* and Virgil’s *The Aeneid* are definitely there, both of which are stories that fit this description. *The Divine Comedy*, says Alan Williamson, who has studied Dante in greater detail, shows “what the Jungians call a Night Journey,” which he explains as follows:

[It is] the story of a person faced with an unbreakable impasse in life, who finds he must plunge deeper, into despair, the darkest sides of his own character, the edge of death – the virtual disintegration of the ego – before he can feel himself reorganized, reinvigorated with a goodness and strength that somehow go beyond ego. And, perhaps even more important for us, Dante describes this journey, for the first time in history, not as the story of a god or a half-divine hero, Aeneas or Gilgamesh, but of a relatively ordinary human being. (1)

The story that Conrad has written resembles Dante’s in many respects, and the hero is, similar to Dante’s, an ordinary man who has to face horrible things within and without in order to become a good person. However, I hesitate to agree with J.H. Stape, who claims that this story is “explicitly linked to Dante’s imaginary journey . . .” (*Cambridge* 48).

On the other hand, I do not agree with Anthony Fothergill either, who rejects a purely mythical reading of “Heart of Darkness.” One of his main objections against such a reading is

that there are situations in *The Divine Comedy* which never occur in Conrad's story, although they should if the story really were a re-writing of Dante's. One of the situations mentioned as an example by Fothergill is the fate of the Alberti brothers, who in Dante's *The Inferno* are found guilty of treason and thus frozen into a lake. No such thing happens to Kurtz or anyone else in "Heart of Darkness" (37). I will not include Dante in the analysis to any greater extent. Nevertheless, you cannot ignore the parallels that are there, in the case of characters and situations, for example.

When reading this story, it is difficult not to notice certain recurring images that function as symbols, for example the river and the forest. The reason for this is that Conrad intended for us to notice them. Furthermore, the story "echoes of some old 'metaphysical' motifs," such as damnation and torment (Yelton 63, 205). The choice of subject for this essay was, therefore, simple. As Joseph Epstein says, Conrad "swam best in the murky waters of the morally questionable" (1), which is why the theme of morality, especially Marlow's, will function as a link between the different parts in this essay. In some of his works, Conrad examines the scepticism about religion and the question of man being a meaningless creation (Watts 47-8). "Heart of Darkness" is one of these literary works, in which he examines the ultimate moral paradox of, in Watt's words, whether it is "better to be intensely evil than to be mediocre or secularly good" (185). It seems as if Conrad wants us to realise that if Kurtz has sold his soul to the darkness, at least he has had a soul to sell (*Cambridge* 51). According to John A. Palmer, yet another critic,

. . . 'Heart of Darkness' . . . [represents] the finest achievement of Conrad's early period . . . [and it seems] to end in paradox and dilemma; yet [it sustains] a core of affirmative meaning, and [provides] the philosophical and moral base from which the rest of his work must be viewed. (3)

As Donna Richardson has shown, the question of morality has been acknowledged as a basic theme of Conrad's writing. His short story "The Lagoon" from 1898, for example, shows a man in spiritual crisis, a protagonist who does something that is morally wrong (1). Nevertheless, says Christopher Cooper, "[L]ike any other generalisation, this is only a beginning" (11), and of course there are other themes besides morality as well. Conrad seems convinced that there is no absolute truth and no definite morality.

According to Cooper, an author is most likely to reveal a theme of morality in a novel by "showing us what happens to people who act in this particular way." He also mentions the possibility that morality can be shown through the use of narrators or symbolism, but it is not

as likely (16). In “Heart of Darkness,” however, symbolism is indeed used to expose morality in characters, which this essay will show.

2. AIM AND SCOPE

My aim is, first of all, to analyse Conrad’s use of animal imagery in order to recognise how and for what purpose it is used. Secondly, I will try to uncover the symbols that deal with religion and mythological themes, such as the Three Fates, the Last Supper, Buddha’s *mudra* gestures and the spiritual journey. Although these devices are frequently occurring in “Heart of Darkness,” they are not easy to detect, or for that matter understand, especially not when it comes to the question of how they are linked to the theme of morality. My choice of this particular story by Conrad was an easy one to make. Not only does it contain an extensive amount of symbolic features; it is considered to be a milestone in Conrad’s literary career, since his use of metaphors increased dramatically after this publication (Yelton 111).

Since “Heart of Darkness” is one of the most analysed works of literature in modern times, I have narrowed my scope down to symbolism and imagery, which are fairly unexplored subjects as yet. Consequently, the essay will not deal with the questions of Marlow as an unreliable narrator, or with features of colonialism and racism. For practical reasons, only a small part of my discussion, particularly in the sections analysing the spiritual journey and Greek mythology, will involve Dante’s *The Inferno* and Virgil’s *The Aeneid*.

3. APPROACH AND MATERIAL

Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” was first published in 1902 (the edition used here was published by Penguin Popular Classics in 1994). The story contains only three chapters and spans over slightly more than one hundred pages. Although close reading is a time-consuming alternative, it is highly useful when approaching this piece of work in search of symbolism and imagery.

Olof Lagercrantz, a Swedish scholar, has written an analysis of “Heart of Darkness,” which actually reads like a novel itself. *Färd med Mörkrets hjärta* (1987) combines Lagercrantz’ personal analyses of the use of symbolism and imagery in “Heart of Darkness”

with references also to interpretations made by other scholars. Among other things, he sheds some new light on the serpent imagery and the claim made by Frederick Crewes that these images can be linked to sexuality. Lagercrantz, furthermore, connects various sections of this short story to specific parts in the Bible, for example the Last Supper and Jesus' ride on a donkey into the city of Jerusalem. In addition to this, he brings up the question of theme, particularly the moral aspect of the story. Naturally, colonialism and slavery become a significant part of this discussion. Yet, I will focus on Marlow's and, to some extent, Kurtz's individual morality rather than on condemning the institution of slavery as a whole, which would mean taking into account things that are not really relevant to my analysis.

Concerning animal imagery, I have mostly used John A. Palmer's book *Joseph Conrad's Fiction* (1968). It contains an extensive discussion about the recurring serpent theme in practically all of Conrad's works, and plausible explanations for why it occurs so frequently. He claims, for instance, that the serpent represents evil and functions as a force of darkness. Other uses of animal imagery are also discussed, particularly the interesting fact that Conrad often shifts from descriptions of 'nice' animals to pre-evolutionary forms as his stories progress and his evil characters deteriorate further, something which Palmer calls "evolutionary regression" (40). This critic, furthermore, takes up Christian aspects of Conrad's works, particularly in the two novels *Victory* and *Chance*, which can be applied to "Heart of Darkness" as well. He also mentions the allusions to Greek and Norse mythology as well as the Buddha imagery and the spiritual journey.

A second critic who also sheds light on the use of animal imagery is Samir Elbarbary in his article "Heart of Darkness and Late-Victorian Fascination with the Primitive and the Double" (1993). By comparing Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" with other works of literature, for example *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by R.L. Stevenson, Elbarbary establishes the fact that animal imagery is often used to signify primitive behaviour in humans in Late-Victorian novels.

Anthony Fothergill has managed to summarise briefly in *Open Guides to Literature: Heart of Darkness* (1989) the topics in this short story that have been most frequently discussed in the literary world. Fothergill seems to reject a mythical interpretation of this story, since he has found some flaws in the arguments laid out by other scholars. He does, however, agree on the fact that the story represents some sort of spiritual or moral journey, an "ethical struggle" with good and evil (5).

Many of the thoughts I have chosen to include in my essay from *Mimesis and Metaphor* (1967) by Donald C. Yelton deal with religious symbolism, particularly Hell, damnation and torment. This becomes useful when analysing how religion is linked to the theme of morality in “Heart of Darkness.” Yelton’s book, furthermore, contains some discussion about other animal imagery than that of the serpent, which functions as a good complement to Palmer’s analysis.

In spite of the title, a great deal of information about Christianity and the question of morality in my primary source is found in Stanton de Voren Hoffman’s *Comedy and Form in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (1969), as is some discussion about animal imagery. Hoffman includes a specific analysis of the Intended, Kurtz’s fiancée in the story, and what her significance is when it comes to theme and symbolism. Tony C. Brown also, to some extent, discusses Christian symbols found in “Heart of Darkness” (“Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness,” 2000). He particularly brings attention to the fact that the Congo, during the time when Conrad wrote his story, was actually considered by many to represent Hell on earth. I refer to this idea when I discuss morality, good and evil as a theme in connection to Christian values.

Cedric Watts, who is perhaps the best known critic of Conrad’s works, has written *A Preface to Conrad* (1993), which also focuses a great deal on Christian aspects in “Heart of Darkness” and on Conrad’s allusions to myth, such as the Three Fates in Greek mythology. Watts shows that the Bible, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* have apparently functioned as sources of inspiration quite a lot when naming the characters in Conrad’s stories. The same critic has also contributed with a section of analysis in *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*, edited by J.H. Stape (2000), which I find most useful. Watt’s analysis in this book focuses mainly on the use of Greek mythology in “Heart of Darkness” and how Conrad looks upon the question of how the salvation of our souls is joined together with our morality.

One of the most obvious uses of religious symbolism in Conrad’s short story is examined in great detail by P.K. Saha in the article entitled simply “Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” (1992). This critic focuses on the three instances in “Heart of Darkness,” where Marlow is described as a Buddha figure, sitting on a boat and making strange gestures with his hands and body, something that is called *mudra* in Sanskrit. A second article with the same name (“Conrad’s Heart of Darkness,” 1995) deals exclusively with the scene involving the two knitting women. Rita A. Bergenholtz shows that these two can be linked to Greek mythology and the three Fates. She also suggests explanations for why there are only two of

them instead of three, considering that the link to mythology seems obvious. Among other things, Bergenholtz proposes that Marlow is supposed to be the third Fate, the one who determines the fates of Kurtz and the Intended. Sudarsan Rangarajan (1998) focuses on the possible link between Marlow and the Greek ferryman Charon, especially when it comes to their good and evil traits. The boat that Marlow travels in provides Rangarajan's strongest proof for the accuracy of this hypothesis.

Kurtz' sacrifice, self-knowledge and moral is explored in "Paule Marshall: A Conradian Praisesong" by Amani Konan (1995). This critic claims that Kurtz sacrifices his life and his soul in order to gain wealth and honour, which leads Marlow to regard him as less of a human being and a man with little or no morals. A similar theme is discussed by Donna Richardson in "Art of Darkness: Imagery in Conrad's 'The Lagoon'" (1990), which uses another one of Conrad's short stories as its primary source. However, the conclusions she draws can be applied to "Heart of Darkness" as well. The question of why morality is so often a theme in Conrad's fiction is analysed in Joseph Epstein's "Life Sentences: The Art of Joseph Conrad" (1994). Here Epstein compares Conrad to another famous novelist, the great Henry James, and tries to give an explanation to why Conrad's works are so powerful even today.

Although Alan Williamson never mentions Conrad in his article "Dante Our Contemporary?" (1994), his comments on the significance of the journeys in Dante's and Virgil's respective works can also be applied to "Heart of Darkness."

4. TERMINOLOGY

At this stage it feels appropriate to establish the meaning of the literary terms that we encounter in this analysis. The two terms that will be most frequently mentioned are *symbols* and *imagery*. Although they may seem synonymous, they are actually quite different. Chris Baldick explains about the easiest way to distinguish between images and symbols: "Images suggesting further meanings and associations in ways that go beyond the fairly simple identifications of metaphor and simile are often called symbols" (*Concise* 106). I feel, however, that in order to comprehend the meaning of these terms, we need some more definitions.

According to John Anthony Cuddon, "Many *images* (but by no means all) are conveyed by figurative language, as in metaphor [and] simile" (323). Often an image does not

refer to just one concept but to several that “overlap and intermingle and thus combine” (324). It is also important to remember that an image is not to be taken as a “visual reproduction of the object referred to” (Abrams 121). When an author claims that a character in a story resembles a toad, s/he probably means that this character is fat, ugly or smelly.

A symbol, on the other hand, can be said to be practically anything animate or inanimate, for example a rose, a cross or a tree, that represents or stands for something else (Cuddon 671). “In this sense,” says Abrams, “all words are symbols.” He notes, however, that when we discuss symbolism in literature, the word ‘symbol’ is only used to refer to a particular word or phrase that in turn signifies something else (311). Actions or gestures within a narrative can also hold symbolic meaning. Cuddon gives the example of the case with “a journey into the underworld . . . and a return from it” (671), which is often part of mythology, such as in the famous love story of Orpheus and Eurydice. When a journey takes place in literature, it is clearly a question of symbolism and not imagery, since this is an actual event that is not expressed in metaphors or similes. Yet, the interpretations of it vary from person to person. Some claim that it is a “spiritual experience,” others “a dark night of the soul” and a third “a kind of redemptive odyssey” (ibid.). These arguments will, however, be further explored later in this analysis.

Symbols can also be linked to the concept *archetype*, a term invented by Karl Jung, the famous psychoanalyst. Cuddon says, “Creatures, also, have come to be archetypal emblems. For example . . . the snake . . . Further archetypes are . . . the paradisaical garden and the state of ‘pre-Fall’ innocence.” He says, moreover, that certain themes are also archetypal, such as “the arduous quest of search” and “the descent into the underworld” (55). According to Stape, “The interest of Freud and Jung . . . in the importance of myth was shared by numerous Modernist writers, and here . . . Conrad seemed to have anticipated them” (*Cambridge* 51).

The next seemingly synonymous terms that need to be separated are *theme*, *subject* and *topic*. The theme of a story is what Cuddon calls the “central idea” (695). Baldick explains it as “a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work’s treatment of its subject-matter; or a topic recurring in a number of literary works.” In the case of Joseph Conrad, critics agree that his recurring theme is morality. Baldick separates theme from topic and subject by saying, “[The] subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action” whereas theme “will be described in more abstract terms . . . [It] may be announced explicitly, but more often it emerges indirectly through the recurrence of motifs” (*Concise* 225).

Having sorted these terms out, the discussions and conclusions in the following sections of the analysis will hopefully not present any obstacles to anyone. With that said, we will now begin the analysis of animal imagery in “Heart of Darkness.”

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. ANIMAL IMAGERY

As mentioned already, Christopher Cooper comments that one way for an author to introduce a theme of morality into his texts is to use symbolism. Depending on what the author wishes to convey in a story, s/he can use descriptions of animal behaviour or animal looks to enhance a symbolic meaning in a character. Descriptions of domestic animals, such as kittens or dogs, shows loyalty in a character. Similarly, farm animals, such as horses, give the effect that the reader expects a character to be hard working and often a bit stubborn. According to the *Online Dictionary of Symbolism*, “[A]nimal imagery seeks to depict generally negative qualities and instincts relevant to human nature.” It also “[reflects] the basic instincts that motivate human behavior” and is “often included to depict the urges which man must overcome in order to enter the realm of spirituality” (Keyword: ANIMALS).

Samir Elbarbary notes that “all creatures are united in the primitive natural state, and the high/lowest hierarchy is blurred . . . ” (1). This becomes apparent when reading Conrad’s short story “Heart of Darkness,” where animal descriptions are used to portray men of all shapes and colours as well as inanimate objects and machines. A reader of Joseph Conrad’s works will anticipate “heavy animal metaphors,” says John A. Palmer (231). For instance, all of Conrad’s evil characters, his “emissaries of darkness,” are described through animal metaphors (ibid. 83). Elbarbary helps us to understand why this is a favourite tool of Conrad’s by establishing the fact that in the late nineteenth century, at the time when Conrad was active, readers had a “fascination with primordial darkness, the oxymoronic ‘fascination with the abomination’.” The horrible was thought to reflect man’s inner being, his animal origin “hidden behind an attractive facade” (1), which is why many novels from this time, such as R.L. Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, “[H]ave in common the use of animal imagery to signify the ‘primitive’ ” (8). Animal behaviour and looks are invariably connected with darkness and evil in “Heart of Darkness” as well.

Conrad, furthermore, has a peculiar and very interesting habit in most of his novels and short stories. He often begins his stories by describing characters with relatively ‘harmless’ animal traits, such as those of dogs or horses. As the story progresses, however, and the bad characters start to show their ‘evilness,’ Conrad replaces his descriptions with those of “earlier evolutionary forms” (Palmer 193). In the short story “Falk” (published in 1903), for instance, there are examples of animal descriptions that involve centipedes, scorpions and lizards (ibid. 88). What I have found in “Heart of Darkness”, however, is that images of domestic animals are used throughout the entire story to describe good and bad men alike, while images of early evolutionary forms signifying evilness in characters are scarce. However, the most commonly used animal imagery in all of Conrad’s works, including “Heart of Darkness,” is the serpent, a pre-evolutionary and highly distrusted animal (ibid. 21, 40).¹

This animal is one of the most complex and best known symbols we have. Depending on social and cultural contexts, the serpent can represent negative aspects of existence such as destruction, evil, death and poisonous behaviour, as well as temptation and deceit. This link is especially apparent in Christian tradition, for instance the story of Genesis, where Satan, in the shape of a serpent, tricks Eve into eating of the forbidden fruit. Eve then gives the fruit to her husband Adam, which makes them both lose their innocence. For this God punishes them by throwing them out of the Garden of Eden. Mankind is now left on her own in the world, forever bound to experience difficulties without a watchful God by her side. The *ODS* suggests that this episode “ ‘is of critical importance for symbology’ ” since every human being on earth feels a “ ‘need for salvation after [Adam and Eve’s] sinful deviation from God’s plan’ ” (qtd, Keyword: ADAM AND EVE).²

Consequently, it comes as no surprise to us that Conrad chose to use the serpent imagery in a story that revolves around a main character’s moral dilemmas. In Conrad’s earlier works as well, the animal imagery is clearly linked to motifs such as “disorder, regression and value-inversion, for example” (Palmer 41). Thus, the symbolic meaning of the serpent is hardly unknown to Conrad. Donna Richardson, in her analysis of Conrad’s short story “The Lagoon,” says that “the serpent in this primordial garden” is linked to “the root of illusion and evil” (3). This image appears in “Heart of Darkness” already in the first chapter and then reappears throughout the story in various forms:

¹ The word ‘serpent’ will be preferred throughout this analysis, since it has an established symbolic meaning in contradistinction to ‘snake.’

² The *Online Dictionary of Symbolism* will from now on be referred to as *ODS*.

It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I [Marlow] looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird. Then I remembered there was a big concern, a Company for trade on that river. Dash it all! I thought to myself, they can't trade without using some kind of craft on that lot of fresh water – steamboats! Why shouldn't I try to get charge of one? I went on along Fleet Street, but could not shake off the idea. The snake had charmed me. (12)

We are given more than one important clue of information in this passage. First of all, the image of a serpent is used to signify a river that runs from the sea and through the dark jungles into the heart of the Congo. This is the very river that Marlow and his crew travel on in search of Kurtz. Secondly, the serpent itself can be interpreted as being an evil creation, a disciple of Satan.

Thus, by combining these two, we may presume that the river in the shape of a serpent has come from an evil place, Hell perhaps, and then glides through the jungle into the open ocean, leaving death, destruction and evil along its way. This interpretation is confirmed by Marlow, right before he goes to the Congo, when he comments that “the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake” (15). The first critical incident in the story occurs when Marlow first comes to the Congo and finds his boat “at the bottom of the river” (30). It takes him several months until he is able to continue his quest. It is now time for Marlow to see death at close range.

His first encounter is in a camp of black slaves, where many of them have walked off into the shadows in order to die peacefully. Later on, Marlow actually stumbles over the dead body of a man named Fresleven, where he lies hidden in the high grass. Nearing the station where Kurtz is located, Marlow's boat is attacked by savages, and the black man who steers the boat is killed right in front of him. The last description of death in the story is given towards the very end, when Marlow has found Kurtz, dying in his hut. All these experiences weigh so heavily on Marlow's conscience that he feels as if he has lost all sense of hope and relief. Once again, the connection between the serpent imagery (in the case of the river) and moral difficulties (such as passively facing acts of cruelty towards slaves) is obvious.

Marlow mentions that it took him thirty days to reach “the mouth of the big river” (21). The description of the waterway becomes interesting if we try to imagine the river as being an actual snake with a physical body. According to the *ODS*, a mouth can be seen as the entrance

to the human soul. This is what happens in the case of Marlow. He not only journeys down a river in search of adventure; he also travels within himself in search of answers. When the word mouth is used in the context of a river, “[It] assumes the meaning of a door or gate, which lends access to another realm of existence” (Keyword: MOUTH, RIVER). Olof Lagercrantz suggests that this other realm is the Underworld (21).

Not long after the serpent imagery has been introduced in the story, it is once again used, and this time the serpent’s bodily movement is in focus. This time Marlow has reached the sepulchre city, which by most critics is thought to refer to contemporary Brussels. The possibility that the city functions as yet another symbol will be further explored later on in the analysis. Marlow describes the narrow dark streets he has to cross in order to reach the head office. Says Marlow: “I slipped through one of these cracks” (14), which is a rather unusual use of vocabulary in connection with a human. This movement might be taken to suggest that of a snake. Consequently, the question that we will now devote some time to is why Conrad has chosen to use serpent imagery in connection to Marlow’s movement in this passage. Lagercrantz notes that there is a kind of erotic feel to this sentence, which really sets the story in motion from now on (29). The phrase “slipped through one of these cracks” can be seen as a sexual act, the act of love-making, to be specific. Although I do not agree with a purely sexual interpretation of this passage, a critic named Frederick Crewes, whom Lagercrantz mentions in his book, interprets the mouth of the snake in the previous quotation as a mother’s womb (21). The journey would, in that case, signify Marlow confronting his past and a dominating mother. As we know, the serpent can be seen as a phallos symbol, which gives further validity to this kind of sexual interpretation.

My personal reading, however, is somewhat different. Continuing along the ‘evil path,’ Marlow’s movement ought to symbolise his inner being, that is his morality rather than his sexuality. Consider the fact that Marlow, in this passage, is about to enter into a new realm, that of the office in the sepulchre city. From now on, those who occupy themselves with exploiting African land and animal life control his destiny. He is about to become one of ‘the bad guys.’ Therefore, his motion in the alley could be seen as a sign of guilt. Marlow does not wish to be noticed, so he ‘slips through’ the open door without anyone noticing him.

A second, and more likely, possibility is that Marlow, since he assumes the physical shape of a snake for the first and only time in the story, also takes on its evil characteristics. It comes as no surprise to us after having read the story that the character Marlow is not considered by critics to be a ‘nice’ person. Along his way through the jungle, he continually

shows some strong traits of racism and bigotry. He does not, for instance, consider black slaves to be equal to whites. Even their movements seem odd to him. The following passage is taken from the scene, earlier mentioned, where Marlow finds the slaves lying in the shadows by the riverside:

While I stood horror-struck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone. (25)

The way in which he says this makes the reader imagine a four-legged animal, a dog perhaps, rather than a human being. The same animal imagery, explicitly, is found later on in the story when Marlow calls the black fireman who helps out on the boat “an improved specimen” (52). He says, further, that “[h]e was there below me, and, upon my word, 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” (52). The traditional interpretation of dog imagery is, as we know, not a negative one. Dogs are typically used to portray “loyalty and vigilance,” as well as the acts of a “guardian and protector” (*ODS*, Keyword: DOG). What we see from Conrad’s use of it, however, is that dogs in his story are used to signify negative aspects in humans.

Another unusual description of the blacks is given when Marlow is inside a hut, talking to a manager at the jungle station, when a caravan of slaves arrives:

The flies buzzed in a great peace.

Suddenly there was a growing murmur of voices and a great tramping of feet. A caravan had come in. A violent babble of uncouth sounds burst out on the other side of the planks. All the carriers were speaking together, and in the midst of the uproar the lamentable voice of the chief agent was heard ‘giving it up’ tearfully for the twentieth time that day... He rose slowly. ‘What a frightful row,’ he said. (27)³

The connection between flies and the noise made by black slaves is apparent. At first Marlow speaks of the buzzing flies that disturb the silence peacefully inside the hut, only to complain about a similar sound, “a growing murmur,” a “violent babble of uncouth sounds,” from the outside in the very next sentence. Just in case we are still unclear if this is a question of animal imagery or not, Conrad later repeats it: “A steady droning sound of many men chanting . . . came out from . . . the woods as the humming of bees comes out of a hive . . . ” (92). Considering the position of the black slaves in the jungle, the

³ Any initial quotation marks marking Marlow’s utterances as the source of the narration as an intradiegetic narrator will be excluded in this essay. They are not really needed since the whole story is told by Marlow, to an audience of attentive listeners.

interpretation of insect imagery found in the *ODS* seems highly appropriate. According to this source, insect imagery is used, especially in fairy tales, to signify precision. “[Insects] are called upon to do impossible tasks,” but can also symbolise plagues (Keyword: INSECTS). A good example of the latter is when grasshoppers overflow Egypt in the Bible.

When we apply this information to “Heart of Darkness,” we realise that insect imagery is really used for these purposes in the story. The black slaves have been either bought or hired (the story does not say which) to work for the white exploiters. Their working conditions are terrible: “Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest” (24). Obviously they are there to perform tasks which the whites are unable to take on since they are less physically fit to cope with heat and tropical diseases. Not even Kurtz, who is described as being a deity or a super-human, is immune to the climate. Some characters in the story even believe that “the climate may do away” with him (45). However, the whites show blacks no respect whatsoever but see them more as trouble. They are repeatedly called “criminals” and “savages” by the whites.

Nevertheless, there are incidents in the story when Marlow treats white men with as little respect as he does the black, which gives further cause for the reader to dislike Marlow’s character and see him as having the same traits as a serpent. For instance, he shows little understanding for a man who shows his fear when savages are attacking their steamboat. “That fool-helmsman,” says Marlow, “his hands on the spokes, was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse” (64). The image of a startled horse, traditionally a farm animal, is now used to signify stupidity.

Kurtz, whom Marlow admires for some reason unknown even to himself, is also grouped among the lower creatures towards the end of the story, when he is said to be “crawling on all-fours” (93). Elbarbary, who recognises the use of animal imagery to signify primitive behaviour in humans, says: “A simple image brings out Kurtz’s status: when left to himself, he becomes a quadruped ‘crawling on all-fours’ back to his station, back to a prehuman state . . .” (8). He concludes his discussion about Kurtz: “. . . Kurtz, no less than other neo-primitives, is an evolutionary throwback, the ‘man-that-was’ [a term used by Bram Stoker in *Dracula*] . . .” (9). He belongs among the primitive ‘criminals,’ such as Dracula and Dr. Moreau, in that he also behaves like an animal and at times looks as one as well. Kurtz, furthermore, shows “the duality of human nature” (*ibid.*), which is

typical of this group of men. They are extremely clever but have no control over their savage sides. Kurtz, for example, is described as a great poet and orator by his 'friends,' but at the same time he behaves like a mad man and kills people in the most bizarre ways. Perhaps the reason why Marlow lacks respect for his former idol is due to the fact that Kurtz reveals his primitive nature and his fear of "The horror! The horror!" (100). Whatever the reason, we may conclude that if Conrad made the conscious choice of letting Marlow "slip through" a crack, he did it in order for us not only to compare Marlow to a serpent, but also to its negative traits which Marlow displays repeatedly throughout the story. Conrad could, for example, have used the words 'walking into an alley' instead.

Another thing we notice when reading "Heart of Darkness" is that Conrad uses animal imagery to give meaning to inanimate objects, such as carts or boats, as well as humans. For instance, when Marlow has reached a station in the jungle of the Congo, he sees on the path "an undersized rail-way truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal" (22). The question is why Conrad has chosen this way of expressing himself. Perhaps he wants to show that objects also have souls. If that be the case, it would help to explain the extended imagery of Marlow's boat as a crawling beetle in several places.

The first passage where this occurs is about halfway through the story: "Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico" (50). Indeed, Conrad soon repeats his phrasing: ". . . I [Marlow] caught myself listening on tiptoe for the next beat of the boat, for in sober truth I expected the wretched thing to give up every moment. It was like watching the last flickers of a life. But still we crawled" (55). Here we clearly see that Conrad intends for us to regard the boat as an animate object, infused with "life," which crawls further into the jungle.

The critic Vernon Young has an interesting theory regarding these and other similar passages in "Heart of Darkness," which Yelton mentions in his analysis. No matter how unlikely this interpretation feels, it still deserves to be mentioned briefly. According to Young, the image of a beetle in one of Conrad's other stories, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* published in 1897, seems to be linked to the old Egyptian religion of sun worship. Those who are familiar with this subject know that a beetle holds a very strong symbolic meaning. A scarab beetle signifies eternal life and resurrection, which was why scarabs were always put inside the tomb of old Egyptian pharaohs (Yelton 138, note 24).

The question if this was what Conrad intended remains uncertain, and, as Yelton comments: “. . . [F]or all I know Conrad may have had it in mind – but if so it must remain a puzzle why he did not do more of it. In any case the critic’s [Young’s] ‘unquestionably’ strikes me as overconfident” (ibid.).

5.2. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

5.2.1. Marlow: Friend or Foe?

Although I agree with Yelton that beetles are probably not used as religious symbols in “Heart of Darkness,” other symbols relating to religion in general are fairly common. They are, in fact, so common that I have had to split them up into different sections in the analysis in order to deal with them. The use of religious bipolars, for example Heaven and Hell, is prevalent in a number of works by Conrad. For example, in *Victory*, published as late as 1915, Conrad uses “Edenic and Satanic imagery to create a consistent overtone of Christian allegory,” and in *Chance*, published in 1914, this also seems to be the case (Palmer 188).

Conrad, furthermore, has showed time and time again that he is familiar with the symbolic value of different characters in the Bible. Cedric Watts has comprised a fascinating list of character names from Conrad’s stories. In *Victory*, for example, one of the women is named Magdalen, which, of course refers to the fallen woman Mary from Magdalen who washed Jesus’ feet. In *Nostramo*, published in 1904, the main character Nostromo is sometimes referred to as Gian’ Battista. This name, naturally, corresponds with John the Baptist’s, Jesus’ friend and cousin. One of the characters in *The Shadow-Line* (1917) is called Ransome. This might not be as easy to decode as the previous examples. However, there are places in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as the Ransom of mankind (Watts 193-5).

The most interesting aspect of the criticism regarding religious symbolism in this story, nevertheless, is the variety of different roles which critics have found Marlow to be a representative of. Strangely enough, he is said to impersonate both the light and the dark forces of existence, i.e. a man either with or without morals. According to some critics, he is similar to the Messiah; according to others, he is Satan in disguise. We will first take a look at the numerous passages in “Heart of Darkness” where Conrad alludes to Christianity and passages in the Bible, and see how Marlow fits into the complex moral pattern.

The first time that Conrad alludes to the Bible is when Marlow is about to set out on his journey and goes to visit his aunt one last time. Says Marlow: “One more thing remained to do – say good-bye to my excellent aunt. I found her triumphant. I had a cup of tea – the last decent cup of tea for many days . . . ” (17). Like Jesus, Marlow shares his Last Supper with his disciple, his aunt (Lagercrantz 16), who is “a dear enthusiastic soul,” “ready to do anything, anything” for him to aid him on his quest (12). Actually, the whole journey resembles a Holy crusade (Lagercrantz 30), and Marlow is described as a Messiah. Even so, Marlow tells his viewers that he hesitated slightly and felt “for a second or two . . . [that] instead of going to the centre of the continent, I were about to set off for the centre of the earth” (18). What Marlow is actually about to find, says Yelton, is not the centre of the earth, but his own inner self, his soul and morality (18), a view shared by many critics. Also Hoffman agrees that “[t]his is primarily a journey toward some kind of self hood, and possibly an encounter with a second self . . . ” (17).

Interesting to note here is that a forest, in analytical psychology, represents “an unexplored” part of the unknown, the unconscious and its mysteries (*ODS*, Keyword: FOREST). Furthermore, a journey signifies an exploration of one’s inner self where serenity is the ultimate goal (Keyword: JOURNEY). With this in mind, the choice of place and action in “Heart of Darkness” seems highly appropriate when it comes to investigating Marlow’s morality. Despite the fact that Marlow is not a likeable person, because of his racist views, he nevertheless, seems to be a man of strong moral values. He tells his audience that “[w]hat redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to... ” (10). Marlow never tells us explicitly what “idea” he refers to. He might be talking about imperialism, or, as I feel it is safe to assume, some sort of Christian values. On the other hand, Conrad is often deeply ironic in his stories, and this may well be the case here.

The anonymous extradiegetic narrator in “Heart of Darkness” tells us that you could see that Marlow was supposed to work “within the brooding gloom” (5), i.e. that he was destined to enlighten the people who lived their lives in spiritual darkness. He was about to become one of the “[h]unters for gold or pursuers of fame” who “had all gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire” (7), those who were “men enough to face the darkness” (9).

Palmer draws our attention to an interesting parallel made by Conrad himself, in *Chance*, between sailors and monks:

‘Profane men living in ships, like the holy men gathered together in monasteries, develop traits of profound resemblance . . . because the service of the sea and the service of a temple are both detached from the vanities and errors of a world which follows no severe rule . . . Simplicity is a good counsellor and isolation not a bad educator. A turn of mind composed of innocence and scepticism is common to them all, with the addition of an unexpected insight into motives, as of disinterested lookers-on at a game.’ (qtd in Palmer 203)

This passage, says Palmer, also gives an “abstract expansion to the Buddha-imagery that [has] earlier been associated with Marlow” (203), which we will return to below. What we also find here is that Conrad suggests that soul-searching comes natural to sailors, which brings us back to the question of Marlow’s morality. Since he is a sailor, he has plenty of time to ponder over difficult issues: “We,” says Marlow, “looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs forever, but in the august light of abiding memories” (6). It was like “travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world . . . An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest” (48). The river “seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me – and into my thoughts” (11). We may thus assume that he has a sense of right and wrong, which is why he chooses to go on the mission to save Kurtz, to make him aware of the “idea.”

Like an apostle on a holy mission, Marlow encounters devils, fallen men and pilgrims on his journey through the Congo jungle (Yelton 24). He describes it as “a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares” (20), and is accompanied by a strange group of men. Marlow tells his audience that “[w]hite men with long staves in their hands appeared languidly from amongst the buildings, strolling up to take a look at me, and then retired out of sight somewhere” (30). “They wandered here and there,” says Marlow, “with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence” (33). I feel that the word “faithless” here could make the reader think of fallen angels, who were originally good but, according to Matthew 25:41, were turned out of God’s kingdom after they had refused to help humans in need out of pure jealousy. Considering the supercilious and somewhat nonchalant actions of the apostles towards the blacks, for instance, this may well be what Conrad intended for us to see. Had these men really been Christian apostles, they would hopefully not have approved of the atrocity committed towards the native inhabitants of the Congo.

Marlow, then, is about to become a holy crusader bound for a savage land to save a lost soul, namely Kurtz's. He seems to be well aware of this since he calls himself "one of the Workers," an "emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle" and his aunt tells him that she is looking forward to him saving millions of ignorant souls from " 'their horrid ways ' " (18). By using the word apostle here, I feel that Conrad makes clear to us that he wants Marlow to be seen in a divine light. Nevertheless, we must once again consider the possibility that Conrad is being ironic towards his readers.

Marlow eventually arrives in the Congo jungle, the place that Conrad for some reason saw fit for this particular story. His choice can be explained by two factors. Firstly, it is a well-known fact that he used to work there on a boat himself and thus knew the country and the conditions of people working and living there well. Secondly, according to Tony C. Brown, the Congo at the time when the story was written pretty much represented Hell on earth in western eyes (3), where tropical diseases, wild animals and savage black tribes took turns killing the whites who came there to exploit the country.

To illustrate just how the Hell imagery is used, let us return to the passage where Marlow 'slips through' the crack in the wall at the very beginning of the story and take a look at the full context:

A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones, imposing carriage archways right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. I slipped through one of these cracks, went up a swept and ungarnished staircase, as arid as a desert, and opened the first door I came to. (14)

It is not a pretty picture that Conrad paints for us. He speaks of solitude and deep shadows, dead silence and arid desert-like spaces. In this passage alone, critics have found much to comment on regarding Christian symbolism. Yelton says that there is something of an Apocalyptic feel to this description (186). Conrad describes the room Marlow steps into next as a "sanctuary" headed by a compassionate-looking secretary (15). It seems as if Marlow has left Hell behind and gone into Heaven. Hoffman claims that the entire city can be "imagined as an entrance to hell" (31), a city which Marlow says "always makes [him] think of a whited sepulchre" (14). Lagercrantz tells us that the whitewashed sepulchre, which Marlow speaks of, is directly related to a passage in the Bible (22). In Matthew 23:27, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees, and tells them that they are similar to whited sepulchre, which means that they look nice on the outside, but that they are filled with hypocrisy and impurity on the inside and should therefore be avoided. Obviously Conrad intended for us to interpret the town where

the Company headquarter is located in the same manner, as a place of bad undertones, which is illustrated by the quoted ‘alley’ passage earlier.

The image of Hell is frequently conjured up in “Heart of Darkness.” Traditionally, Hell is thought to symbolise the “night and the frightening unknown.” More suitable for the purpose of this essay, it is also a place that represents jealousy and moral suffering (*ODS*, Keyword: HELL). It is therefore highly appropriate that our ‘moral hero’ Marlow is the one who encounters Hell most frequently in the story. The second example is taken from when Marlow finds a group of black slaves in the forest:

My purpose was to stroll into the shade for a moment; but no sooner within than it seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. The rapids were near, and an uninterrupted, uniform, headlong, rushing noise filled the mournful stillness of the grove, where not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved, with a mysterious sound – as though the tearing pace of the launched earth had suddenly become audible.

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair . . .

They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing but earthly now – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom . . . These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin. (24)

Those who have read stories about Hell in, for example, Dante’s *The Inferno*, recognise this description to some extent. This may have been Conrad’s purpose, considering the fact that he calls the place “Inferno.” Marlow is indeed similar to the lonely wanderer Dante in *The Inferno* (Song 3:21-51), who sees shadows sitting on the cliffs in Hell, making awful sounds and crying incessantly. These are the unfortunate souls who have lived their entire lives without ever having been commended or condemned by anyone, who have never cursed God or praised him, which is why they are neither allowed into Heaven or Hell. They have lost all hope of ever dying, and are doomed always to suffer.

This is the environment in which Kurtz rules, “with the might as of a deity” (72). He has become something of a god to the black tribe and is called a master, a guru, with the right to punish those who disobey him (Lagercrantz 123-5). It is a wild and savage place where the nightly noises sound strangely familiar to Marlow:

A great silence around and above. Perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and

wild – and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country. (28-9)

Kurtz is like a semi-devil in Hell, who commands a trading post and has an important position ‘down there,’ i.e. in the Congo (27). Marlow draws the conclusion soon after having met Kurtz that he is so powerful, actually, that “there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased” (81). When he sees Kurtz’s house in the forest, however, he realises that Kurtz does not only have the power to kill, he also has the inclination. Says Marlow: “They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes if their faces had not been turned to the house” (82).

Marlow, of course, meets other semi-devils as well. Some of these looked as if they had just risen from somewhere underneath the face of the earth (85). He has earlier mentioned having met “the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire” (23). Here I immediately see a connection to three of the seven deadly sins in Christianity: anger, greed and lust. If Conrad intended for us to interpret these isolated passages in this particular matter is uncertain. Nevertheless, I find no other plausible explanation for him to have put a sentence about devils, like the one quoted above, into a text for no particular reason. There is overwhelming evidence in the text to prove that one character, namely the manager of the central station, combines all the remaining four deadly sins into one character. He can be supposed to represent evil incarnated, so to speak. Marlow calls him “a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly” with a tendency to be “insidious” (23). Interesting to note, further, is that he is said to have a mouth that resembles “a door opening into a darkness he had in his keeping” (31), which could signify that he is a keeper of the dark forces and belongs to them. His physical appearance suggests that he personifies the sins gluttony and sloth. If we read between the lines, we are also told that he feels conceited about what he does. Still, he envies Marlow for his position and supposedly close relationship with the Company office in Brussels. This gives us the last two sins: pride and envy. These examples indicate that Marlow is confronted with the deadly sins on his journey, but chooses not to take part in any of them by avoiding the manager completely.

There is one passage in particular, however, that runs counter to the idea that Marlow is an apostle or Jesus Christ himself who commits no moral errors. At the jungle station, Marlow tells us about a strange incident that occurred some months after his arrival: “It did not appear clear to me what he [the agent] was waiting for. An act of special creation perhaps.

However, they were all waiting – all the sixteen or twenty pilgrims of them – for something” (34-5). We are soon told what they were waiting for:

Instead of rivets there came an invasion, an infliction, a visitation. It came in sections during the next three weeks, each section headed by a donkey carrying a white man in new clothes and tan shoes, bowing from that elevation right and left to the impressed pilgrims. (43)

Readers steeped in the western tradition cannot help but see the allusion to Jesus Christ in this quotation. This, consequently, raises an important question: if Conrad did intend for us to regard Marlow as a Messiah in the previous passages, why does he now assign this role onto a complete stranger? My opinion is that Conrad wants to show us that although Marlow is *not* a Messiah, he is a divine messenger. In one place, Marlow uses the words ‘in the name of’ (95), which, according to Brown, indicates that he stands below a higher force, some authoritarian power that is not present at the jungle station (7). This explanation makes us see Marlow in a different light. Fothergill implies that Kurtz is similar to Faust who sold his soul to the devil (94); perhaps Marlow is now in the jungle to retrieve it? When he meets the man on the donkey face to face, Marlow tells his viewers that “he was putting leading questions as to my acquaintances in the sepulchral city” (35), i.e. he wanted to know more about Marlow’s employers and his mission in the jungle. Marlow calls him a “papier-maché Mephistopheles” (37), which once again draws a conscious parallel to the story of Faust. Kurtz, we are told, is similar to Faust in that he sells his soul to the devil, i.e. the Company office and his own personal greed. The critic Amani Konan claims that Kurtz is willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of honour and wealth (1). In reality, he ends up losing his soul to the darkness (2):

He [Kurtz] had taken up a high seat amongst the devils of the land – I mean literally. You can’t understand. How could you? . . . [H]ow can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man’s untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude . . . by the way of silence – utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness . . . I take it, no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil: the fool is too much of a fool, or the devil too much of a devil – I don’t know which . . . Mind, I am not trying to excuse or even explain – I am trying to account to myself for – for – Mr Kurtz – for the shade of Mr Kurtz. This initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere honoured me with its amazing confidence before it vanished altogether. (70-1)

Although Marlow only meets this man very briefly towards the end of his journey, Kurtz makes a strong impression on him from the first time he hears of him.

Naturally, Marlow is not the only one who is devoted to Kurtz. A Russian man whom Marlow meets at Kurtz's station in the jungle warns him that the savages are unwilling to let him leave. The reason for this, he answers when Marlow asks, is that Kurtz has expanded the minds of him and many others (78). Marlow notes that this man seems both eager and reluctant to speak of Kurtz (80), whom he considers to be a sort of god. Again, biblical parallels suggest themselves, whether or not Jews want to take the name of God 'in vain' according to the First commandment. Marlow tells his audience that the Russian man was engrossed with Kurtz, and that he constantly thought and talked about him. It seems as if Marlow, too, to some extent begins to understand and admire the evil soul he has come to save:

He won't be forgotten. Whatever he was, he was not common. He had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour; he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings: he had one devoted friend at least, and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking. (72)

Looking at this isolated quotation, one cannot help but thinking of 'great,' often dictatorial, leaders of the 'real' world, such as Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin. Regardless of our (hopefully disapproving) opinion of them and their actions, they all, in similarity to the fictional character Kurtz, possessed the ability to convince ordinary people to commit horrible acts in their names. By inventing someone like Kurtz, it seems as if Conrad anticipated the arrival of these men.

Lagercrantz notes that Marlow seems tempted to give up his personality and become one with the darkness he fights against, namely Kurtz and the other colonisers (134). Yet he chooses not to, after having met Kurtz in person. Towards the end of his journey Marlow seems to have gained some sort of insight into his own morality: "If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man . . . I had – for my sins, I suppose – to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself" (95). I agree with Elbarbary, who comments that Marlow actually has Kurtz to thank for his personal development, since his meeting with this man makes him search his soul and his own unconscious (6).

The question of Kurtz and sin arises when Marlow meets the "one soul in the world" who still believes in Kurtz's purity (72). She is simply referred to as Kurtz's Intended. We do not get to meet the Intended in person until fairly late into the story when Marlow has left the

Congo jungle and is back in Europe. News of Kurtz's death has reached Europe, and Marlow is the self-appointed person who will give Kurtz's fiancée information about his last moments in life. Up until now, he has only seen her in the photograph that Kurtz carried with him in his pocket. Meeting her in real life, Marlow is astounded by her looks:

I know that the sunlight can be made to lie, too, yet one felt that no manipulation of light and pose could have conveyed the delicate shade of truthfulness upon those features. She seemed ready to listen without mental reservation, without suspicion, without a thought for herself. (104)

His first meeting with her in her apartment is none the less astonishing. Says Marlow: "She came forward, all in black, with a pale head, floating towards me in the dusk. She was in mourning" (106). The word 'float' describes metaphysically the Intended's. The strange choice of vocabulary is given an explanation in Marlow's description of her physical appearance: "This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident, and trustful" (106). There can be no doubt by now that Conrad wants to describe to us an ethereal being, an angelic creature with a halo.

This woman has made a strong impression on a number of critics, too. Yelton, for example, says that she is the saving illusion (28), and Hoffman comments that she is filled with light and separated from the rest of the world (28). The Intended is the one who makes Marlow see Kurtz in a different light. If such an innocent-looking woman was engaged to him and still, a year after his death, mourns him, then he cannot always have been wholly bad. Marlow observes that "[s]he carried her sorrowful head as though she were proud of that sorrow, as though she would say, I – I alone know how to mourn for him as he deserves." (106-7). I conclude that Kurtz's 'mental instability' arose after he had left his home country and gone on the expedition to the Congo, which is why the Intended regards him as a good man despite all that Marlow has seen and heard about him.

Aside from the Intended, there are few women in "Heart of Darkness" and even fewer who are given a voice. Rita A. Bergenholtz has studied them more closely and found that the fictional character Marlow tends to transform the women he meets into symbols, perhaps in order to cope with them being more powerful than he is (1). I have already mentioned his aunt, who resembles a disciple, and the Intended, who has the likeness of an angel. In the next section of the analysis, we will meet, among other things, the two women whom I find most interesting in this story: the two knitting ladies in the Company office.

5.2.2. *The Knitting Women and the Buddha Gestures*

I have chosen to include these women in my analysis, which mainly deals with Marlow, after having read an interesting article by Bergenholtz, who claims that they are present in the story for a very specific reason. Before going into her arguments, let us take a look at the section in the story where we first hear about them: “The two women, one fat and the other slim, sat on strawbottomed chairs, knitting black wool. The slim one got up and walked straight at me [Marlow]” (14). Personally, I get a ‘fairytale’ feeling, which tells me that these ladies are not simply mentioned by chance. They seem to hold some sort of symbolic meaning. Conrad uses the words fat and slim as bipolars, similar to how in fairytales by, for example, the Grimm brothers, adjectives may appear as bipolars to show a difference between two characters, often two sisters or brothers. This, for instance, can be seen in the story about Cinderella. She is described as slim and beautiful, whereas her evil sisters are both ugly.

Still, most critics have focused on the mentioning of the words “black wool.” The colour itself takes on a symbolic meaning, since Conrad often contrasts light and darkness, black and white in his stories. Black signifies something negative, dark and perhaps deadly. I will, however, not go any further into this general discussion here. Instead, let us look at the next rather extensive extract where these women are described in more detail:

In the outer room the two women knitted black wool feverishly. People were arriving, and the younger one was walking back and forth introducing them. The old one sat on her chair . . . and a cat reposed on her lap. She wore a starched white affair on her head, had a wart on one cheek, and silver-rimmed spectacles hung on the tip of her nose. She glanced at me above the glasses. The swift and indifferent placidity of that look troubled me. Two youths with foolish and cheery countenances were being piloted over, and she threw at them the same quick glance of unconcerned wisdom. She seemed to know all about them and about me, too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinizing the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. *Ave!* Old knitters of black wool. *Morituri te salutant.* Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half, by a long way. (15-6)

As we can see, there are a number of instances in this section as well that resemble a fairytale. For one thing, the old woman is described as a witch. She has a cat on her lap and a wart,

although it is placed on her cheek and not her nose as is customary on witches. Even more interesting, though, is the conscious or unconscious connection that Conrad makes with ancient myth. Fothergill notes that the two women not only resemble the Sybil in Virgil's *The Aeneid*, who can look into the future and foresee what will happen; they are also similar to the spinners in old Greek mythology. They are associated with fate and are therefore called Fates (31). These spinners also appear in Norse mythology as Nornorna. These three female spinners, named Clotho/Urd, Lachesis/Skuld and Atropos/Verdandi have the same function: they control human fate. The sisters spend their time knitting threads of human lives; the first knits the wool, the second measures it, and the third cuts the thread.

Conrad implies that these two women do indeed know secrets about the people who enter the office, and that Marlow can see this in the way they look at him and at the other people in the room. The older woman has a "swift and indifferent" look of "unconcerned wisdom" in her "old eyes" and she "seemed to know all about" Marlow and the others. He even calls them guardians of "the door of Darkness," which with all certainty means death, or as Conrad puts it, "the unknown." If we are not convinced by now, the last sentence states the final evidence: "Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half, by a long way." I am of the opinion that this refers to death, and that these two women have some sort of power over the lives of those who enter the office. It is also interesting to note that the quotation is taken from when Marlow has just signed the contract and decided to leave for the Congo. When he enters the outer room again, after having talked to the manager, the two women "knitted black wool feverishly." This could imply that they are aware of the dangers in the Congo, and that they wish to prolong Marlow's life. They do not want him to join the poor explorers who never saw the old women's faces again. Could it be that Conrad was unaware of this link between his knitting ladies and ancient mythology? It seems highly unlikely, considering, for instance, the fact that he chose to use the word "fateful" instead of "faithful," which means that at least the older of the two stands in connection with fate.

According to Bergenholtz, Conrad had an intricate reason for this allusion, which involves Marlow and his morality. She begins by asking an obvious question: if Conrad/Marlow is supposed to allude to Norse and Greek myth, why does he include only two of the three women in "Heart of Darkness"? In her article, Bergenholtz mentions the critic Frederick R. Karl, who has studied this section of the novel more closely. He claims that if Conrad had used the third Fate, Atropos/Verdandi, as well, it would have meant that Marlow was about to die, since she is the one who cuts the thread of life (1-2).

A second explanation of a kind is that Marlow sees himself as the third woman in the room. The evidence of this is that Marlow's story is repeatedly referred to as a 'yarn.' According to Karl, this usage would imply that Marlow is aware of his spinning a thread of some sort. I have found nothing in the text to support this statement. Nevertheless, it does sound reasonable that Marlow *is* the third Fate, if one considers the fact that he is the one who controls Kurtz and the Intended's fates (Bergenholtz 2). By choosing to take Kurtz with him at the end of the story rather than leaving him with the savages in the jungle, Marlow has an influence on how Kurtz's life will end. Similarly, by choosing not to tell the Intended the truth about Kurtz's final hours, he saves her from the devastating sorrow that this revelation would without a doubt have caused her.

Assuming that Karl's reading of Marlow is correct, this would help to explain the Latin quotation: '*Ave! . . . Morituri te salutant.*' Gladiators originally spoke words similar to these on the arena in Rome, when they stood before Caesar and saluted him. There is one important difference, however, which causes some confusion among critics. The gladiators said '*Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutamus,*' which means something like 'Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute you.' We note that in "Heart of Darkness," Conrad has either by accident or deliberately changed the quotation slightly, so that instead of meaning 'we' it means 'those.' I agree with Bergenholtz, who concludes that by saying this, Marlow "chooses to ignore his connection to the other 'fools' who travel into the heart of darkness . . . [and] ignores his relationship to the women who see these fools off, these 'gladiators' . . ." (2).

The next section in "Heart of Darkness" that seems out of place in this essay when discussing Marlow and his morality, concerns the so-called Buddha gestures. Yet we will see that several critics have chosen to focus on them in order to analyse Marlow's character. When Marlow is sitting as an older man on the riverboat on the Thames, telling his story to the anonymous main narrator and some other listeners, he performs some gestures that make up a symbolic series. The narrator tells us that there was a special feeling in the air, that they felt tranquil and spiritual in the stillness of the evening (6). This is when Marlow begins his story.

Palmer notes that the older Marlow has an inward gaze, that he is highly meditative and philosophical (10). Critic P.K. Saha has found evidence to say that Conrad in fact describes not just any gestures, but specific gestures performed by the holy man Buddha. Saha finds plenty of support for this reading in the text, and also mentions the fact that Conrad had travelled in the East and had every opportunity to learn about Hinduism. According to this

critic, the gestures that Marlow performs are called *mudra*, which, in Sanskrit, means ‘symbolic gestures.’ They were performed in old India in connection with religious events, dancing and acting (1-2). After having read Saha’s interpretation, I feel convinced that this was indeed what Conrad intended for us to notice when reading the story. As we shall see, Conrad went to great lengths to describe Marlow’s postures as similar to those of the Buddha.

The first gesture is associated with the moment of Buddha’s enlightenment. It is called ‘*bhumisparsha mudra*’, or ‘the earth-touching gesture,’ from the Sanskrit words *bhumi*, meaning earth, and *sparsha*, meaning touch: “Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol” (6). Buddha made this gesture when the forces of darkness threatened him (Saha 2). Possibly Marlow, who is about to tell his story, feels uneasy as well, since there are so many bad memories related with this journey.

Saha also notes that all of the *mudra* descriptions in “Heart of Darkness” are mentioned in connection with water (1). Since he is a sailor, water for Marlow is thought to function in the same way as earth does in the stories about Buddha, as some sort of comfort or support (2). Symbolically, earth represents nurturing, longevity and creativity. It can also stand for stability and the foundation of man’s structure (*ODS*, Keyword: EARTH). Water, on the other hand, is more closely related to Christianity. For one thing, Christians are purified by water when they are baptised. Moreover, Christ walked on water as if it were earth (Keyword: WATER).

The next posture described by Conrad is called ‘*abhaymudra*’: “ ‘Mind,’ he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower . . . ” (9-10). Again, according to Saha, only someone with a strong integrity used this gesture, thus the name ‘fear-not-mudra’ (2). Here is the first evidence that the Buddha gestures are connected with Marlow’s sense of morality. However, by mentioning Marlow’s European clothes and lack of a lotus-flower, Conrad gives us a hint that although Marlow seems to be a man of strong morals, he is not supposed to be interpreted literally as a man of Buddha’s kindness and spiritual qualities. Saha stresses that neither she nor Conrad intends for Marlow to represent the Buddha. Critics such as Singh and Achebe often accuse Marlow of being a racist, a sexist and a colonialist, whereas the Buddha practised a religion of empathy, tolerance and kindness (1).

When we read the last few pages of the story, we realise that Conrad only means for Marlow to resemble a Buddha figure. At this point, Marlow does not only use his hands to express himself anymore, but includes the rest of his body: “Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha . . . the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky” (111). This posture is called ‘dhyānibuddha’ or the ‘Buddha in deep meditation.’ Silence is vital here, and the water, which is described as being “tranquil,” helps to emphasise this fact (Saha 2).

Saha is convinced that Marlow is a “flawed hero” and “a product of the nineteenth century, sharing in its guilt, yet attempting to transcend it” (1). At the beginning he is more than willing to work for the Company in the Congo, though we feel that he is not totally devoted to it morally:

They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. 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. (10)

Saha compares him with a character in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* who says: “ ‘I am a holy man minus the holiness’ ” (qtd 1). I find this comment right to the point. Although Marlow is on a crusade to save Kurtz and calls himself a pilgrim, he definitely does not show himself to be a man of faith. He seems to be a racist, despite what he says about exploitation in the quotation above, and we know that he is able to tell a lie, although it is for the sake of the Intended. The critic Sudarsan Rangarajan holds simply that Marlow is both good and evil, that he is a hero in search of the truth and a person with a dark side (1). I feel that this proves that he is just an ordinary man and a representative of some of the men of that time.

Marlow’s act towards Kurtz’s fiancée could be a way for Conrad to show Marlow’s compassion towards women, in the same way that Buddha stressed the importance of showing compassion towards others. Although Marlow’s heart is not relieved by this white lie, the Intended’s is. This is a reflection of Saha, who adds: “At the end of the story, it is possible to view him as a fallible hero who took upon himself the stigma of telling a white [lie] about dark truths” (2-3). We are told that the fictional character Marlow feels very strongly about lies: “There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies – which is exactly what I hate and

detest in the world – what I want to forget” (38). In this sentence we clearly see how Marlow’s morality shines through. He is used to telling the truth at all times and expects others to do so as well. Later on in the story this is further emphasised: “I laid the ghost of his [Kurtz’s] gifts at last with a lie . . . ” (69). The irony of the story is, one could conclude, that Marlow travels to the Congo in order to save Kurtz’s soul, but in reality ends up losing his own. Eventually he becomes nothing more than part of an “immense darkness” (111).

6. CONCLUSION

There are multiple ways of reading “Heart of Darkness.” It is a nuanced story to which you can apply practically all literary theories, as, indeed, many critics have done. What a symbolic read of the narration does, however, is to show how Conrad has managed to write an interesting story about, among many things, a person’s sense of morality.

Following the tradition of Victorian writers, many turn-of-the-century authors include animal imagery in their stories in order to enhance symbolic meanings in characters. We are told that this was also a favourite tool of Conrad’s. Animal imagery traditionally portrays negative traits in people. In Conrad’s stories, however, animal descriptions portray all kinds of people, good and bad alike. He seems to favour earlier evolutionary forms, such as centipedes and lizards. His most frequently used animal, however, is the serpent.

In “Heart of Darkness” it symbolises disorder, death, disaster and illusions among other things. The river in the Congo has the likeness of a snake, and so does the main character Marlow in one passage, if one chooses to interpret it as such, when he is about to betray his personal beliefs and become a coloniser. The river runs through the jungle and enables for colonisers to travel further into the country in steamboats, and Marlow, being one of the explorers, assimilates the bodily movement of a snake and slips through a crack in the wall as soon as he has made the decision to join the expedition. He claims that the snake has lured him, but we realise that he becomes a traveller, and consequently a coloniser, by his own free will. As a child, he always wanted to see the far-off places on the map and sees his opportunity to do so by the help of the Company in Brussels.

We soon realise, however, that Marlow’s beliefs cannot possibly have been that strong to start with. In his thoughts, at least, he treats the black workers in the Congo very badly. He calls them bees and dogs, and seems to not be able to identify with them at all. The only time

he seems truly affected is when he stumbles upon a group of them sitting in the shade under some trees by the riverside and waiting to die. In this example, Conrad has borrowed some descriptions from Dante's *The Inferno*.

As we can see, a second favourite tool of Conrad's is religious symbolism, which he frequently returns to in his stories. In "Heart of Darkness," Marlow is supposed to signify a sort of Messiah, or an apostle. He speaks of an "idea" that is worth cherishing and worshipping. We are not told what the idea is, specifically, and there is a possibility that Conrad is in fact being ironic and speaks in favour of colonialism. After all, Marlow is a coloniser, and perhaps a sexist and a racist as well, as some critics have claimed. For all we know, colonisers are not good people. In fact, they make their living through exploiting those who are weaker and destroying entire countries. Can Marlow be a good person, a Messiah no less, if he is a coloniser? We are left to consider this question for a while, up until the point in the story when Conrad declares that Marlow is *not* a Messiah, and that his morals, eventually, do not hold any greater significance. True, he feels bad about lying, but finds a need to do it anyway at the very end of the story after having left the Congo.

The place of setting is more important to the theme of the story than one might think. Early twentieth century Congo signifies the actual Hell on earth, and Marlow has to travel through it in search of the morally flawed Kurtz. On the way, Marlow is also forced to confront his own morality. After having witnessed death, destruction and faced the seven deadly sins personified in the manager, he must make a conscious choice. Either he embraces Kurtz as a deity, as indeed some of the other colonisers and many of the blacks have, or he saves him from the darkness within his soul and without.

This brings us to a point made by Bergenholtz, who claims that Marlow somehow controls Kurtz's destiny. In the Company office, Marlow encounters two of the most interesting women in the story. The two sit outside the door to the manager's room and knit black wool. At the same time they scrutinise everyone coming into the office with old, all-knowing eyes and give them indifferent glances. Marlow senses that there is something peculiar about these women, and we are told by a number of critics that they are supposed to represent the Three Fates, or *Nornorna*, from ancient mythology. There are only two of them sitting in the room, and Bergenholtz tells us that the reason for this is that Conrad intended for us to see that Marlow would survive the story, considering the fact that the third Fate would have cut the thread of his lifeline had he met her. Another possibility is that we are supposed

to regard Marlow as the third Fate, thus being the one who determines the fate of others', more specifically Kurtz and his fiancée's.

Marlow has his most obvious moment of self-realisation when he meets the Intended for the first time. Kurtz, the antagonist, is dead and Marlow has to tell his fiancée, the Intended, the truth. Nevertheless, he decides in the spur of the moment not to convey the entire truth to the girl, but chooses to give a more flattering picture of Kurtz's final hours. Some might say that this is the only time in "Heart of Darkness" when Marlow truly shows that he has a conscience and does not want the poor girl to suffer more than she already has. Instead of giving her the truth and thus causing her grief, Marlow decides to take the suffering upon himself by telling her a white lie, something that he despises.

Whether we consider Marlow to have been a nice person as a young man or not, he seems to have grown wiser with age. Sitting on a boat on the Thames, telling his story about the Congo to some sailors, he seems to have become something of a different person. Saha claims that Conrad has indeed intended for us to see this, and uses the tool of symbolism to convey his intention. Marlow speaks in the same way as Buddha did, and uses *mudra* gestures to emphasise his moral standpoint. Similar to Buddha, who cherished earth as his ally, Marlow stands in direct connection with water, being a sailor. The tranquil water of the Thames also helps to set the mood of the story. Saha draws the conclusion that Conrad intended for us to see Marlow as a person of high morals, but not equate him to Buddha.

The intertexts of "Heart of Darkness" seem to point to the same conclusion. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Virgil's *The Aeneid* alike revolve around ordinary men faced with tremendously difficult moral dilemmas. Marlow is also a simple man, travelling through his own personal hell, and ends up confronting his morals. However, he is no more divine than Dante or Aeneas.

The story seems to point to the simple fact that a man can wish to do all the good deeds in the world, but eventually other circumstances along his path, such as external influences from others, are destined to influence him to do otherwise. Marlow's initial reason for going into the Congo jungle was to fetch Kurtz. However, we know by the end of the story that he has failed in his mission. In fact, Marlow is forced to give up his own beliefs and tell a white lie in order to save the Intended, which places him among those who dwell in darkness.

7. WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCE

Conrad, Joseph. "Heart of Darkness." London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abrams, M.A. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Fortworth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.

Bergenholtz, Rita A. "Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Explicator*, Winter 53:2 (1995), 102. *EBSCO*. Online. Internet. 30 January 2001.

Brown, Tony C. "Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Studies in the Novel*, Spring 32:1 (2000), 14. *EBSCO*. Online. Internet. 8 January 2001.

Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad, The. Ed. J.H. Stape. Cambridge: University Press, 2000.

Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, The. Ed. Chris Baldick. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Cooper, Christopher. *Conrad and the Human Dilemma*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.

Cuddon, John Anthony. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Revised ed. Chatham: W & J Mackay, 1979.

Dante Alighieri. *Den gudomliga komedin*. Trans. Ingvar Björkeson. 3rd ed. Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1999.

Elbarbary, Samir. "Heart of Darkness and Late-Victorian Fascination with the Primitive and the Double." *Twentieth Century Literature*, Spring 39:1 (1993), 113. *EBSCO*. Online. Internet. 3 September 2000.

Epstein, Joseph. "Life sentences: The Art of Joseph Conrad." *New Criterion*, June 12:10 (1994), 16. *EBSCO*. Online. Internet. 30 January 2001.

Fothergill, Anthony. *Open Guides to Literature: Heart of Darkness*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1989.

Hoffman, Stanton de Voren. *Comedy and Form in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. Paris: Mouton, 1969.

Konan, Amani. "Paule Marshall: A Conradian Praisesong." *Critical Arts*, 9:1 (1995), 21. *EBSCO*. Online. Internet. 8 January 2001.

- Lagercrantz, Olof. *Färd med Mörkrets Hjärta: En bok om Joseph Conrads roman*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1987.
- Online Dictionary of Symbolism*. Ed. Geoff Brown and Jamie Smith. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. 11 February 2001.
<<http://www.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html>>
- Palmer, John A. *Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1968.
- Rangarajan, Sudarsan. "Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Explicator*, Spring 56:3 (1998), 139. EBSCO. Online. Internet. 30 January 2001.
- Richardson, Donna. "Art of Darkness: Imagery in Conrad's 'The Lagoon.'" *Studies in Short Fiction*, Spring 27:2 (1990), 247. EBSCO. Online. Internet. 30 January 2001.
- Saha, P.K. "Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Explicator*, Spring 50:3 (1992), 155. EBSCO. Online. Internet. 30 January 2001.
- Watts, Cedric. *A Preface to Conrad*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Longman, 1993.
- Williamson, Alan. "Dante Our Contemporary?" *American Poetry Review*, Sep/Oct 23:5 (1994), 43. EBSCO. Online. Internet. 6 February 2001.
- Yelton, Donald C. *Mimesis and Metaphor: An Inquiry into the Genesis and Scope of Conrad's Symbolic Imagery*. Paris: Mouton, 1967.