

Decay and Decomposition of Western Ideals and Values in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

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Abstract

The turn of the twentieth century was a time of tremendous progress in several different fields. Yet, this progression brought about the destruction of established norms and systems without offering a feasible alternative. It created a devastating effect on modern man causing a sense of dislocation, a loss of faith, a chaotic and meaningless life, and total disorder throughout Europe. Joseph Conrad explored this decay and decomposition of values and ideals in his novella *Heart of Darkness*. A thorough analytical examination of this work can provide valuable insight into its revolutionary contribution to literature. The purpose of the present paper is to bring an analytical approach to the gradual decay and decomposition of Western Society in Conrad's fiction. The novel will bring the alienation and dehumanization into the open. Therefore, as will be seen, Conrad's literary work suggests that western ideals and values are deceptive. The study also argues that, as an attempt to bring morality, the "civilizing mission" brutalizes both colonizers and colonized alike due to its essential hypocrisy.

Keywords: Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad, dehumanization, the West, decay, decomposition....

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Joseph Conrad' ın *Karanlığın Kalbi* adlı Eserinde Batı İdeallerinin ve Değerlerinin Bozulması ve Ayrışması

Öz

Yirminci yüzyıl başlangıcı sayısız alanda büyük ilerlemelerin olduğu bir zamandı. Fakat, bu gelişim ve ilerlemeler, uygulanabilir bir alternatif sunmadan, kurulu normları ve sistemleri yıktı. Bu gelişim ve ilerlemeler, modern insana yerinden olma hissi, inanç kaybı, kaotik ve anlamsız bir hayat ile karşı karşıya bırakma gibi ciddi sorunlar ile baş başa bırakarak, Avrupa'da menfi yıkımların olduğu bir etkiyi de beraberinde getirdi. Joseph Conrad, 1899 yılında yazdığı *Heart of Darkness (Karanlığın Kalbi)* adlı eserinde bu bozulmayı; değerlerin ve ideallerin ayrışmasını konu etmiştir. Bu eserin kapsamlı ve analitik incelenmesi, edebiyata devrimci bir katkı sunarak, dönemin toplumu ve şartları hakkında değerli bilgiler sağlayabilir. Çalışmanın amacı, Joseph Conrad' ın kurgusundaki Batı toplumun derece derece çürütmesine ve ayrışmasına analitik bir yaklaşım getirmektir. Roman, insanlar arasında yabancılaşmayı ve dehümanizasyonu ortaya koymaktadır. Dolayısıyla, görüleceği gibi, Conrad' ın edebi eseri, batıdaki ideallerin ve değerlerin aslında aldatıcı ve yanıltıcı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda, ahlak sağlama çabası olarak sunulan “medenileşme misyonu” un esasen ikiyüzlülüğünden dolayı hem sömürgecileri hem de sömürülenlerin acımasızca yaraladığını savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad, dehümanizasyon, Batı, çürüme, ayrışma...

Introduction

The imperial powers of the world colonized, exploited, and transformed countries all over the world until the end of World War II. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said states on the expansion of Western imperialism as: “by 1914, the annual rate had risen an astonishing 240,000 square miles, and Europe held a grand total of roughly 85 percent of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions, and commonwealths” (Said, 1994, 18). Capitalism also paved the way for this expansion with the “overseas markets, raw materials, cheap labor and hugely profitable land” (Said, 1994, 22). With a rapidly thriving capitalism, the social structures of the dominating countries transformed accordingly. The growing population of the poor and uneducated class caused dramatic transformations in economic and social life, which were also reflected in cultural life. Said points out that “the processes of imperialism occurred beyond the level of economic laws and political decisions, and – by predisposition, by the authority of recognizable cultural formations, by continuing consolidation within education, literature, and the visual and musical arts” (Said, 1994, 35). As a first-hand witness of that age, Joseph Conrad, in his novella *Heart of Darkness*, portrays imperialism not as a giver of light, but; as a harbinger of chaos, disorder, and dehumanization. The novella questions the dogmas of the age and redefines some ideals and values. Moreover, the reality of the Western world becomes an illusion, and the actual address of the darkness turns out to be the heart of civilization. Conrad also accuses the individual as the source of corruption and dehumanization. The governing and the ignorant working class are responsible for these two. And like the poor class, the rich also suffered from the outcomes of the era in terms of alienation and isolation. Conrad’s novella delineates the decomposition and decay of the Western ideals and values and individual contribution to them.

Decay and Decomposition of Western Ideals and Values

Joseph Conrad is the first great novelist in the English tradition to take up the subject of European imperialism. In his most famous work, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), he focused on the European “scramble” for control of Africa, drawing on his personal experiences as a merchant seaman in the Belgian Congo. As the story unfolds, Conrad’s attitude toward imperialism proves to be a devastating critique of imperialism, tracing its crimes back to one single motivation: greed. By the end of the book, Conrad reinforces a terrible self-knowledge that, “If there can be no end to imperialism, then perhaps there can be an end to some of the more absurd and self-deluded idealizations of it”(Conrad, 1899, 8).

Conrad drew on his own experiences of exile and disillusion when writing *Heart of Darkness*. He had traveled extensively in Asia, and in 1890, he made the most important journey of his career, sailing to the coast of Africa and steaming up the Congo River. He had long been fascinated with Africa, but what he found there was nothing like what he’d hoped for. At the time of his visit, the Congo was the private property of King Leopold II of Belgium. Leopold’s men plundered the country and ravaged the population, killing as many as 10 million people in the process. Conrad’s trip proved both physically and morally debilitating. “Everything here is repellent to me,” he wrote in one letter to a friend. “Men and things, but above all men”(Conrad, 1997, 3). These feelings would make their way into *Heart of Darkness*, in which Conrad saw himself as pushing “only a very little...beyond the facts of the case”(Conrad, 1997, 4). Conrad had no hope of putting an end to the scramble for Africa. But, his aim was to challenge the idealization or glorification of European imperialism. Over the course of the novel, supposedly civilized Europeans engage in numerous acts of casual cruelty. Indeed, they enjoy the opportunity to beat, starve, and enslave the Africans. In describing one group of traders, the chief character, Marlow tells us that their sole desire was “to tear treasure from the bowels of the land with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe” (Conrad, 1899, 23). This is especially true of Mr. Kurtz, the novel’s most compelling character. Kurtz comes to Africa hoping to spread civilization, yet before long, he has cast aside his mission and

his morals, becoming a total madman. Marlow is unable to rescue Kurtz from corruption and death. In the end, Marlow gains admiration for Kurtz, but only because Kurtz is marginally more honest than the other European traders. He has gained a horrible self-knowledge, Marlow implies, and ultimately, “that is the most one can hope for” (Conrad, 1899, 76). Thus, *Heart of Darkness* questions and deconstructs some principal concepts of Western Civilization such as light and darkness, injustices and savagery. The concepts serve for the benefit of the imperial system and turn out to be superficial through Marlow’s literal and metaphorical journey to the interior Africa which concludes with a realization of the motives lying under the Western Civilization. His journey to ‘the earliest beginnings of history’ helps him to witness the roots of the Western Civilization, which are falling apart with all its components of ideologies, religions, politics, and even past and future. What he finds there is the ‘Ivory’ lying behind all the injustices and evils. As a symbol of material interests, Ivory is the main reason of the Western interference in Africa. Kurtz, the best agent in the profession of collecting Ivory, is the colonizer who went out to the wilderness to conquer the unknown. As such, Marlow’s journey to the darkness questions the basic motives in European Civilization on an imperial setting.

The novel opens on the mouth of the Thames, gateway to London and the heart of the British Empire. As his boat ‘The Nellie, a cruising yawl’ bobs on the water at sunset, the skipper Marlow, who will be the hero-narrator of the tale, reminisces about his first command of a vessel. *Nellie* is waiting “for the turn of the tide on ‘ the sea-reach of the Thames, which stretches ‘ like the beginning of an interminable waterway’ (Conrad, 1899, 5). Both the story - teller and listeners are employees of imperialism: the Director of the Companies, The Lawyer, the unidentified outer narrator and the inner narrator Marlow, ‘ who still followed the sea’(Conrad, 1899, 7). It is certain that the narration is an imperialist one with its teller and listeners.

While onboard, Marlow is inspired by his memories and by thoughts of all the great explorers and mariners, from Sir Francis Drake onward, who have navigated the Thames. He mentions how the Romans had conquered and how the British people differed from the Romans: in terms of British being colonists

but not conquerors, and that they have efficiency. As Marlow narrates how Britain itself was a dark place on the maps in the depths of history, he continues with a classical glorification of imperialism as the 'giver of light.' The parallelism between the Britain and Africa and between the rivers going through them, the Thames and the Congo are aligned accordingly. It becomes clear that the journey will not only be retrospective, one made through the heart of darkness in the uncivilized jungles of Africa, but it will also be to the heart of darkness in the civilized city-life of Britain. The seeming message is clear: London was a dark place when it was first conquered. Congo possesses the darkness and the light of civilization will spread there through the contribution of the colonists like Marlow and Kurtz. However, the real message is that London, the cradle of civilization, possesses darkness at least in the amount that Congo possesses, "And this also," he says, "has been one of the dark places of the earth" (Conrad, 1899, 8). At the root of all imperial conquest is the crime.

The story proper begins in Brussels, but neither that city nor the Congo is mentioned by its geographical name. They are, respectively, the "White City," with a sarcastic overtone of the biblical "whitened sepulcher" metaphor of hypocrisy, and the "heart of darkness," an allusion to the heart shape of the African continent. Marlow's narration continues with the idealization of his voyage; how he "as a little chap had a passion for maps", how the darker places of those maps and especially Congo as the darkest one "resembling an immense snake uncoiled... had charmed him"(Conrad, 1899, 3). The imperialist attitude manifests itself in this idealization. The snake metaphor implies the evil residing in the place that the river goes through. The journey will be an adventurous and dangerous one and the Voyager needs to be brave. Marlow says, "I was going into the yellow. Dead in the center"(Conrad, 1899, 4) and he thinks the companies' officers as "guarding the door of Darkness" (Conrad, 1899, 4). Marlow like a 'Buddha preaching in European clothes' explains what he goes through by stating 'as if, instead of going to the center of a continent', in reality, he was to 'set off for the center of the earth' and how he heard the whispers of 'come and find out' in the air (Conrad, 1899, 5), and how the voyage 'will throw a kind of light on everything about' him and into his thoughts" (Conrad, 1899, 6).

The details of the description of the journey constantly indicate the importance, difficulty, and danger of it. Congo is depicted as a snake, which advances to the devilish darkness and the journey up to the river is resembled to a journey to the center of the earth. His metaphorical journey will also be the beginnings of the history, to its past. He will walk heroically ‘ into the gloomy circle of some Inferno’ (Conrad, 1899, 7), face insidious Satan and reveal the hidden truth. Marlow is brave enough to step into ‘deeper into the heart of darkness’ (Conrad, 1899, 9) like ‘traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world’ (Conrad, 1899, 10). His search soon proves to be a search for his sub-conscious. In fact, his journey can be considered as a pilgrimage of enlightenment to the depths of darkness, which the human condition can descend.

Nevertheless, Marlow’s mission is an imperial journey and the search for his sub-conscious also implies the search for the civilization’s sub-conscious itself. He will finally be one of those ‘pioneers of progress’ (Conrad, 1899, 12). The ‘ heavy writing desk’ He looks through the Company’s office, which he signs documents on including one ‘not to disclose any trading secrets’ (Conrad, 1899, 14). Similar to the desk, the writing activity serves as a symbol of civilization and a tool for the Imperial activity. Cunningham (1998) notes: “The meta-textual writing subject is also a colonial one. The astonishing bookkeeper is the agent of a colonialist system that makes money the supreme value, whose fetish is successful accountancy, spruce book - keeping. Colonizing means writing, and writing –whatever else it might mean–spells colonizing” (Cunningham, 1998, 15).

As his ship approaches the African mainland, Marlow sees a French warship anchored off the coast, pointlessly shelling the bush. “There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding” he writes. Another madness act is that Marlow’s steamer belonged to a Dane named Fresleven; “who was the gentlest and quietest creature” (Conrad, 1899, 16), thought that he was cheated in a bargain, hammers the chief of a native village and in an act of revenge, the chief’s son kills him. Company’s doctor states there in Africa some “mental changes of individuals” (Conrad, 1899, 17) occur. Some go mad; some hang themselves, some change in the character. Thus, the European cannot fit in the reality of Congo, as well as its cultural elements.

Life along with the definitions, meanings, and values begins to transform when they are approaching Africa. Somebody on the ship refers to the natives as 'enemies' (Conrad, 1899, 18) and they are treated as such since the first impression of Marlow at the town of Company's station is threatening. Marlow sees six black men having iron collars on their necks, who are connected together with a chain, and behind them a white man with a uniform jacket and a rifle. "They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea" (Conrad, 1899, 19). The picture summarizes the European interference in the land as exploiters and enslavers. The railway building in the town must be noted as well. Everything is for exploiting the country. What is done is a profitable business: "a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads, and brass-wire sent into the depths of darkness, and in return came a precious trickle of ivory" (Conrad, 1899, 22).

Mr. Kurtz legend begins to take over when they arrive in Africa. During his voyage up to the river Congo, Marlow hears this name with respect, envy, and admiration. The first person to utter his name is the company's chief accountant. Asking who that Mr. Kurtz is, Marlow finds out that he is 'a first class agent and a remarkable person who is "at present in command of a trading post, a very important one"' (Conrad, 1899, 23). The first impression of Kurtz is of a professional colonialist who is very successful in robbing the country of its wealth of ivory. The accountant believes that: "he will go far, very far, he will be somebody in the Administration before long" (Conrad, 1899, 24). The impression he made on people is substantial.

Kurtz' presence at the Central Station is an indication of his focal position in the colonizing activity. He is presented as a very valuable member of the colonizing Company. Even so, Marlow soon finds out that the unhealthy atmosphere of Africa has also reached Mr. Kurtz. Congo appears to be unhealthy and unreal to Marlow. What the individuals are going through there, is a kind of cultural depression. Western reality cannot resist Africa and everything is quite unreal in a dreamlike atmosphere. As the symbol of material interests, Ivory lives over all. Principles, human rights, or even religion which is the basis of the Western Civilization, have all lost their significance. In other words, people

pray Ivory instead of the Christian God. Beating “niggers”, punishing and killing them is seen as a method to prevent “all conflagrations for the future” (Conrad, 1899, 28). Within the unreality, the legendary man continues to become more unreal. It is said that ‘the chief of the Inner Station’ is not only a success for the trading business and collecting ivory, but he is more than that. The real purpose of Marlow’s journey, ‘the evil or truth’ that he searches for, soon personifies in Mr. Kurtz, in the deepest darkness of Africa, at the farthest point to the civilization. The journey to the Inner Station is like, as Frederick Karl (1996) puts it ‘that of Dante, Odysseus, or Aenas, into the underworld of human existence... and the Inner Station’ has totemic values the lair for a dragon or primitive beast, as the mythical hiding place for Loke or another satanic figure of evil’ (Karl, 1980, 30). Similarly, Ross C Murfin (1989) points out “Kurtz, the distinct figure that waits there for Marlow, is a particular kind of evil agent, namely a latter-day Faust figure that has sold his soul in return for forbidden knowledge, experience, power” (Murfin, 1989, 38).

Kurtz is a “universal genius” representing the Western Civilization not only in the profession of collecting ivory, but also “an emissary of pity, and science, and progress” (Conrad, 1899, 33). Kurtz’s desire is not “to tear treasure out of the bowels of the land with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars” (Conrad, 1899, 34). On the contrary, he is there “also for humanizing, improving, instructing”(Conrad, 1899, 35). He is an idealist, a mastermind, a light of Western Civilization sent into the darkness in the eyes of Europeans while glorified as a God for the natives. All Europe, Marlow says at one point, went into the making of Kurtz, and one feels that power of generalization about all empires. “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz”(Conrad, 1899, 37). He had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than the other agents together.

The journey detaches them from their past, similar to getting them ready for a process of purgation. Western Civilization and its cultural extensions become useless for the purgation in the alienating setting of Africa. The individual is free from the cultural restraints to face the truth. The truth is that Western Civilization is a lie with all its ideologies, religions, and memories. Marlow’s

process of realization indicates his realization of the 'European Hero' sent into Africa. Alienation is not the only outcome of this realization, there must be some other sacrifices while going into the heart of darkness. The death of helmsman is another sacrifice during the process. Marlow is alone again, and his only companion is himself: He must meet that truth with his own true stuff- with his own inborn strength: "principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags-rags that would fly off at the first good shake" (Conrad, 1899, 41).

In that mind-blowing journey through the darkness, Marlow finds out that Kurtz made up his mind to return, but suddenly changed his mind. The thing that charms Marlow more is the abnormality and inconsistency of this situation. The reality, the hidden 'inner truth' attracts him. He begins to understand the hubris of the justifications of imperialism such as "each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a center for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing" (Conrad, 1899: 43). Marlow is fully aware of the fact that humanizing, and progress cannot lie in the groans of the beaten natives.

On the other hand, as a European hero, Marlow is brave, intelligent and honest. However, he cannot be free from his cultural prejudices as the hero of the European Culture and behaves as a colonialist there. In his description of the native, he states: "They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, -nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation" (Conrad, 1899, 44). Benita Parry (2007) in describing Marlow's attitude towards the natives: "Distancing mechanism of racial differentiation. This specific agony of a particular individual dying before his eyes, are transmuted into an insidiously vague generalization about the agelessness of blacks" (Parry, 1998, 48).

Marlow, as an employee of imperialism, has the same limited mind. It is not easy to fully grasp such a reality for a European. As he mentions: "the essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach, and beyond my power of meddling"(Conrad, 1899, 46). Hence, Marlow is destined to act as an agent to resurface the contradictions inherent. Yet, the voyage to compre-

hend the reality becomes more dangerous and difficult as he contemplates on the injustices of the trade between natives and Europeans. They give the natives brass wire instead of money, which appears very unusual to Marlow along with everything else.

The danger is heightened when the natives' attack on the steamer. Technology for once does good to the passengers as the steamer whistle frightens off the natives. When Marlow finally reaches Kurtz, he is revealed to be wholly mad and corrupted. But we are led to believe that Kurtz's madness is the only sanity possible in this insane place. Kurtz presents 'himself as a voice' as Marlow approaches him. In fact, Marlow is aware of the difficulty of understanding these realities without living the experience too directly: "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" (Conrad, 1899, 49). The quotation elucidates the difficulty of an individual realization. The experience is shown as the path to find or to confront the reality through experience, as Marlow confronts Kurtz. The reality itself becomes questionable with Marlow comments and the next step is a general questioning of the imperial terminology and arguments. The imperialist claim of bringing light to the darkness and spreading the humanizing civilization reality is questioned since it is apparent that the imperial reality depends on the narration of a European. A manuscript written by a younger Kurtz shows that he was once an ardent idealist, who came to the Congo with the intention of bringing the torch of enlightenment to the natives.

The Western reality is deconstructed along with the impression of Kurtz when Marlow looks at the skulls around his station. Kurtz's voice proves to be empty, possessive and brutal; a tool of imperial exploitation and he proves to be an anti-Christ with deconstruction when Marlow hears him "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my-... Everything belonged to him- but it was trifle"(Conrad, 1899, 50). Kurtz madness brings to surface the sub-conscious of the Western Civilization: possession as one of the motives of the West and its imperialism. And for the possession every sort of brutality is acceptable. As Kurtz writes in his letter addressed to 'the International Society for the Suppres-

sion of Savage Customs' colonizer "must appear to the savages in the nature of supernatural beings" he had to appear to them as a deity. Benita Parry states "colonialism seeks to construct a cultural 'Other' in terms of polarized oppositions such as white/black, good/evil, civilization/savagery" (Parry, 1998, 57). The name of the society is consistent with Parry's statement. The definitions of colonialism and its oppositions are used to designate the cultural side of imperialism. These definitions create what Edward Said terms as 'the commitment to imperialism and colonialism' The commitment in constant circulation and re-circulation, which, on the one hand, "allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples should be subjugated, and on the other, replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the imperium as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples" (Said, 1978, 53).

'The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs' represents a cultural need for imperialism and Kurtz is considered as a theoretician of imperialism, and persona with the practical role in colonizing. Besides, Kurtz' eloquence in both spoken and written language is related to his being a perfect colonialist. Marlow speaks of skill of writing in the report Kurtz penned down for 'the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs as "I've read it. It was eloquent, vibrating, with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for! But it was a beautiful piece of writing" (Conrad, 1899, 54). Kurtz eloquence is further exemplified through his impression on the colonialist and natives. Russian clearly states "You don't talk with this man- you listen to him" (Conrad, 1899, 55). Kurtz is like a powerful preacher or more a magician of words. The nights pass in the magic of his speech in the deepness of Congo as one of the characters, Russian, says: "This man has enlarged my mind. We talked of everything. I forgot there was such a thing as sleep. The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything! ... Of, love too ... he made me see things"(Conrad, 1899, 56).

As Marlow observes "he had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch –dance in his honor"(Conrad, 1899, 57). Marlow takes him as a 'voice' but not as 'body' because his power lies in his words. His

skill at using the language brings him in the symbolical position of swallowing everything in his mouth when Marlow sees him for the first time: "I saw him open his mouth wide- it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow the air, all the earth, all the men before him. A deep voice reached me faintly" (Conrad, 1899, 58).

The heart of darkness that Marlow's voyage aims to arrive in the depths of Congo, has to go through the darkness of Kurtz' open mouth. The darkness is in the darkness of his voice: "A voice! A voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of whisper. However, he had enough strength in him- factitious no doubt- to very nearly make an end of us, as you shall hear directly" (Conrad, 1899, 59). Ross C. Murfin comments on Kurtz' use of the language, and Marlow's respond to it with respect to the ideas of Bruce Johnson (1987) as follows: "Kurtz sets himself up among the natives as a god and creates the illusion, of having a wholly adequate language, for anyone worshipped as a God may name and define at will, without being questioned or contradicted. Marlow, though, sees through the illusion and inwardly challenges Kurtz's language. The severed head on Kurtz's fence posts are said by the man in motley, Kurtz's 'disciple' to be those of 'rebels.' 'Rebels!' Marlow exclaims to himself: What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers-and these rebels" (Murfin, 1989, 74).

The language creates illusions and distorts realities, separates people as slaves and masters, or enemies and allies. Furthermore, Kurtz' voice is the voice of the educated and civilized European and his language is the language of Europe. As it is stated 'All the Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz' with his 'half-English' mother, half-French' father, and "German' name meaning short. It is not a coincidence that Kurtz lies unconscious with illness on the opened envelopes and letters "that littered his bed" (Conrad, 1899, 62), when Marlow first encounters him. Even in his worst condition, he tries to find a semblance of humanity through language. We also know that Kurtz had been writing for the papers in Europe, seeing it as a "duty for the furthering of his ideas" (Conrad, 1899, 63). His hand "roams feebly amongst these papers." Going into the words or into Kurtz's mouth, Marlow finds the soul lying in the darkness. Kurtz's final,

terrible injunction: “exterminate the brutes.” Suggests that genocide is the final solution of the imperial enterprise, wherever and however nobly it starts. After exploitation, there will be no further use for the natives, as much brutes and as expendable as the elephants. Therefore, imperialism brings death to the uncivilized, as it is evident in the outrageous through that remark. The sub-conscious of Western Civilization and its individual are possessed by the brutal, animalistic instincts. As Marlow asserts and ‘Kurtz’s last disciple’ (Conrad, 1899, 67), the Russian accepts, ‘he raided the country’ (Conrad, 1899, 68). Marlow is fully aware of this reality in the deepest darkness: “I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride... ‘The horror! The horror!’” (Conrad, 1899, 69).

Marlow takes the long voyage to the heart of darkness; he enters ‘Inferno’ and confronts the Satan. The Satan he confronts is Western Civilization’s sub-conscious. What he sees is a voice only, an empty voice. The Western Civilization is void as this voice just like the valuable but in fact, useless ivory that comes from Africa. It is built on deceptive values, its reality is different from its appearance and there is violence and horror at the bottom. Instead of their experience with the darkness, Marlow and Kurtz stay as imperialists because as Edward Said (1978) notes:

They are also creatures of their time and cannot take the next step, which would be to recognize that what they saw, disablingly and disparagingly, as a non-European darkness was, in fact, a non-European world resisting imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not, as Conrad reductively says, to re-establish the darkness. Conrad’s tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism had to end so that ‘natives’ could lead lives free from European domination. As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them (Said, *Orientalism*, 89).

The juxtaposition between the rivers Congo and Thames reinforces the real address of the darkness to be in the heart of civilization and the snake lies in the hearts of the civilized individuals. Fleishman comments on the experience of Kurtz as:

The norm against which Conrad's account of detribalization was written is ultimately the concept of the organic state. For Conrad shows that the natives, as well as Europeans, are destroyed by the breakdown of their relationship with a stable order of society- by their loss of that sense of identity with a larger reality that gives the otherwise anarchic individual a rule of life. If we were to give a name to Kurtz's vision of 'the horror,' it might appropriately be anarchy: that state of social decomposition at the opposite pole from organic community. This anarchy is already latent in the individual- individuality and anarchy are implicated in each other- and the absence of an ordering community it springs into action as terrorism (Fleishman, 1995, 79).

Fleishman's (1995) point of view indicates Kurtz' being caught up in the corrupting influence of colonialism and becoming a terrorist in the interior Africa. Marlow gets out of Congo in a resurrection to narrate his story. Maurice Beebe (1964) writes:

When Marlow tells Kurtz's Intended that the last word spoken by her betrothed was her name, he does not tell a complete lie, for the final scene of the story shows that there is as much horror, as much darkness in the dark-eyed girl herself as in the depths of the Congo" and "... Kurtz's final utterance- 'The Horror!' The Horror'-reflects not only his realization that the darkness of evil is everywhere, but, that it drives from within the self" (Fleishman, 1967, 72).

Marlow's chivalric journey to the beginnings of history and into the heart of darkness turns out to be the real darkness lying in the heart of the so-called civilized individual. The narration of Marlow concludes the way it started. The unity of the opening and closing scenes of the novella makes the nature to be seen as a continuum like nature, to present the "theme of all experience being one"(Conrad, 1899, 73). As Leo Gurko (1963) states: "What would happen if Kurtz' dreams became true? Europe would see the reality a few decades later with the realization of Hitler's dreams. How that man could talk. He electrified large meetings. He had faith... He could get himself believe anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party" (Gurko, 1963, 74).

Conclusion

As Marlow's journey throws light on everything, the *Heart of Darkness* brings a new understanding towards concepts like light and darkness, civilized and savage, reality and illusion. The reader hears the voice saying 'come and find out the truth' as Marlow does, and in fact, the texts achieve to deconstruct certain ideas and thoughts. Imperialism, capitalism, materialism and the other components of the 'Western Ideal' are decomposed through the characters and the story. The exposition of the contrariness deconstructs those concepts and systems. Illusion becomes reality while the reality replaces illusion. At the end of the concepts and systems that are defined as the 'Western Ideal' becomes an illusion. Democracy becomes a theatrical play where the ruling and the ruled do not change and colonialism does not bring the light of the civilization to the distant colonized territories but it brings chaos, disorder, bloodshed, and corruption. The machines of the Industrial Age do not work for the good of the public, but they again work for the good of the privileged. The poor African natives' lives are spoiled; they are murdered brutally and enslaved for the meaningless ivory, which is used to decorate the lives of those rich and privileged people. However, those privileged people cannot escape from the influences and effects of the inhumanity, isolation, and alienation, and therefore equally corrupted by the ills of colonialism. The religion loses its humanitarian side as the other institutions. The political discussions, revolutions, the changing nationalist and unionist governments and tortures are all exposed as the wars of benefit in the age of materialism.

All the social groups, classes, and nations take their share of the dehumanization of the New Age. The ordinary English citizen, a simple dock-worker in America, or a universal genius of the Western Culture; all of them feels the dehumanizing, isolating, madding, corrupting and killing effect of the New Age, the genius of that civilization, the 'Western Ideal' becomes an illusion too.

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