



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Analysis Of Characters And A Brief Study On Joseph Conrad's Heart Of Darkness

M Rama Rao, Faculty of English
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
College of Engineering, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam

Abstract

Heart of Darkness is a novella by Polish British novelist Joseph Conrad which is between a novel and a short story in length and scope. It has the genre as symbolism, colonial literature, adventure tale, frame story, almost a romance in its insistence on heroism and the supernatural and its preference for the symbolic over the realistic. Marlow, Kurtz, General Manager, Brick maker, Chief Accountant, Pilgrims, Cannibals, Russian Trader, Helmsman, Kurtz's African intended, Aunt, the men aboard the Nellie are the characters involved in this novella. Mistress, Kurtz's Marlowe serves as the protagonist of this novella. This novel shows economic freedom, social advancement, an escape from a life of being an employee. It seems that the darkness is in fact internalised that it is part of some fundamental if ironic unsoundedness. Kurtz dies uttering his last words- the horror! The horror! Kurtz's wife asks what her fiance's last words were, but Marlowe cannot bring himself to shatter illusions with the truth, instead, he tells her that Kurtz's last word was her name. This novel suggests that power inevitably corrupts. In this novel Marlowe acts as a guide for the reader. The General Manager, the cannibals, the pilgrims are accompanied by Marlowe on his journey up the river from the central station. The chief accountants' most notable character is his spotless white clothing.

Keywords: symbolism, supernatural, protagonist, internalised, unsoundedness, worn out, inevitably, barbarian, conspiratorial.

Introduction:

Joseph Conrad was born in Poland, Ukraine. In his youth, he dreamed of travelling to Africa. He depicts in the novel about the power, how it inevitably corrupts. Heart of Darkness was one of the first novels to provide a critical view of European imperialism. It is a peculiar thing we can find in Conrad's novel is women, one almost never present, in his novels.

Heart of Darkness is a novella by Polish – British novelist Joseph Conrad about a narrated voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State in the Heart of Africa. Charles Marlow, the narrator, tells his story to friends aboard a boat labored on the River Thames. It has the genre of Novella, comics, Graphic novel, Horror fiction, psychological Fiction, Roman a clef, Adventure fiction.

Heart of Darkness centres around Marlow an inward looking sailor, and his journey up the Congo River to meet Kurtz, thought to be an idealistic man of great adept. With the help of his aunt, Marlow get a job as river boat captain with the company, a Belgian Concern Organized to trade in the Congo. As he travels to Africa and then upto Congo. Marlow encounters general inefficiency and brutality in the company's stations. The native dwellers of the region have been forced into the company's service, and then suffer terribly from secret and ill treatment at the hands of the Company's agents. The cruelty and Dirty of imperial entrepraise contrasts sharply with the unexpressive and majestic jungle that surrounds the white man's settlements, making them appear to be tiny islands among a vast darkness.

Marlow arrives at the central station, run by the General Manager, an unwhole some, conspiratorial character. He finds that his steamship has been sunk and spends several months waiting for parts to repair it. His interest in Kurtz grows during this period. The manager and his favourite, the Brickmaker, seem to fear Kurtz s a threat to their position. Kurtz is rumoured to be ill. Making the delays in repairing the ship all the more costly. Marlow eventually gets the parts he needs to repair his ship, and he and the manager starts with a few agents when Marlow calls pilgrim because of their strange habits of carrying long wooden staves wherever they so, and a crew of cannibals on a long difficult voyage up the river. The dense jungle and the oppressive silence make everyone aboard a little jumpy, and the occasional glimpse of a native village or the sound of drums works the pilgrims into a mania.

Marlow and his crew come across a hut with stacked firewood, together with a note saying that the wood is for them but that they should approach cautiously. Shortly after the steamer has taken on the fire wood, It is surrounded by dense fog. When the fog clears the ship is attacked by an unseen band of natives, who fire arrows from the safety of the forest. The African helmsman is killed before Marlow frighten the natives away with the ship's steam whistle. Not long after, Marlow and his companions arrive at Kurtz's inner station, expecting to find him dead, but a half crazed Russian trader, who meets them as they come ashore, assures them that everything is fine and informs them that he is the one who left the wood. The Russian claims that Kurtz has enlarged his mind and cannot be subjected to the same moral judgments as normal people. Apparently, Kurtz has established himself as a god with the native and has gone on brutal attacks in the surrounding, territory in search of ivory. The collection of severed heads adorning the fence posts around the station attests to his methods. The Pilgrims bring Kurtz out of the station house, on a stretcher, and a large group of native warriors pours out of the forest and surrounds them. Kurtz speaks to them, and the natives disappear into the woods.

The Manager brings Kurtz, who is quite ill, aboard the steamer. A beautiful native women apparently, Kurtz's mistress. Appears on the shore and stares out at the ship. The Russian implies that she is somehow involved with Kurtz and has caused trouble before through her influence over him. The Russian reveals to Marlow after swearing, him to secrecy, that Kurtz had ordered the attack on the steamer to make them believe he was dead in order that they might turn back and leave him to his plans. The Russian then leaves by Canoe, fearing the displeasure of the manager. Kurtz disappears in the night, and Marlow goes out in search of him, finding him crawling on all fours toward the native camp. Marlow stops him and convinces him to return to the ship. They set off down the river the next morning, but Kurtz's health is failing fast.

Marlow listens to Kurtz talk while he pilots the ship, and Kurtz entrusts Marlow with a packet of personal documents including and eloquent pamphlet on civilizing the barbarian which ends with a scrawled message that says, exterminate all the brute's the steamer breaks down, and they have to stop for repairs. Kurtz dies, uttering his last words – The horror! The horror! – in the presence of the confused Marlow. Marlow falls ill soon after and barely survives. Eventually he returns to Europe and goes to sea Kurtz's intended (his fiancée). She is still in mourning, even though it has been over a year since Kurtz's death, and she praises him as a paragon of virtue and achievement. She asks what his last words were but Marlow cannot bring himself to worn out her illusions with the truth, instead, he tells her that Kurtz's last word was her name.

Analysis of Characters :

Marlow:

The protagonist of Heart of Darkness. He is philosophical, independent minded, and generally doubtful of those around him. He is good at storytelling, eloquent and able to draw his listeners into his tale. Although Marlow shares many of his fellow Europeans' Prejudices, he has seen enough of the world, and has encountered enough degraded white men to make him doubtful of imperialism.

Kurtz :

He is the chief of the inner station, and the object of Marlow's quest. He is a name of adept we learn among things. He is a gifted musician and a fine painter. He is a man who understand, the power of words, and his writings are marked by an eloquence that obscures their extremely shocking, message. Although he remains an enigma even to Marlow. Kurtz clearly utilizes a powerful influence on the people in his life. In doing so, he has become wildly successful but has also incurred the wrath of his fellow white men.

General Manager :

The chief agent of the company in its African territory, who runs the Central station. He owes his success to a healthy constitution that allows him to outline all his competitors. He is average in appearance and average in abilities, but he possess a strange capacity to produce discomfort in those around him, keeping everyone sufficiently unsettled for him to spend/deploy his control over them.

Brick Maker :

The Bricks Maker whom Marlow also meets at the central station, is a favourite of the manager and seems to be a kind of corporate spy. He never actually produces any bricks, as he is supposedly waiting for some essential element that is never delivered. He is trivial and immoral and assumes that other people are too.

Chief Accountant: An efficient marker with an incredible habit of dressing up in spotless whites and keeping himself absolutely well ordered, despite the squalor and heat of the outer station. Where he lives and works. He is one of the few colonials who seems to have accomplished anything.. He has trained a native woman to care for his garments.

Pilgrims :

The staggering money grabbing agents of the central station. They carry long wooden staves with them everywhere, reminding Marlow of traditional religious travelers. They all want to be appointed to a station so that they can trade for ivory and earn a commission. But none of them actually takes any effective steps toward achieving this goal. They are possessed with keeping up a layer of civilization and proper conduct. And are motivated entirely by self interest. They hate the natives and treat them like animals although in their materialism and ridiculousness they appear less than human themselves.

Cannibals :

Natives hired on the crew of the steamer, a surprisingly reasonable and well tempered bunch. Marlow respects their self-discipline and their calm acceptance of adversity. The leader of the group, in particular, seems to be intelligent and capable of ironic reflection upon his situation.

Russian Trader :

A Russian sailor who has gone into the African interior as the trading representative of a dutch company. He is adolescent in appearance and temperament, and seems to exist wholly on the glamour of youth and the boldness of adventurousness. His brightly patched clothes remind Marlow of a merry andrew. He is a devoted disciple of Kurtz's.

Helmsman :

A young man from the coast trained by Marlow's antecedent to pilot the steamer. He is a serviceable pilot, although Marlow never comes to view him as much more than a mechanical part of the boat. He is killed when the steamer is attacked by natives hiding on the riverbanks.

Kurtz's African Mistress :

A fiercely beautiful, woman loaded with jewellery who appears on the shore when Marlow's steamer arrives at and leaves the inner station. She seems to make use of an undue influence over both Kurtz and the natives around the station, and the Russian trade points her out as someone to fear, like Kurtz. She is a conundrum she never speaks to Marlow, and he never learns anything more about her.

Kurtz's Intended :

Kurtz's innocent and long suffering fiancée, whom Marlow goes to visit after Kurtz's death. Her persistent certainty about Kurtz's love for her reinforces Marlow's belief that women live in a dream world, well to protect against unwanted changes from reality.

Aunt :

Marlow's adoring/devoted relative, who secures him a position with the company. She believes strongly in imperialism as a charitable activity that brings civilization and religion to suffering. Simple vicious person. She, too, is an example for Marlow of the lack of sophistication and illusion of women.

Fresleven :

By all accounts a good tempered. He is the captain of the steamer. He is nonviolent man. He was killed in a dispute over some hens, apparently after striking a village chief.

The Men Aboard the Mellie :

These are audience and friends who are with Marlow aboard a ship on the Thames.

References Books:

1. Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Orient Black Swam Pvt. Ltd ISBN: 9788125004233
2. <https://www.sparknotes.com>
3. <http://en.m.wikipedia.org>