



DECONSTRUCTION OF BINARIES IN THE NOVEL

“HEART OF DARKNESS

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Abstract

This project is about binary oppositions and contradictions that exist in our society. My project name is “Deconstruction of Binary Opposition in the Novel Heart of Darkness”. For this I have taken the novel “Heart of Darkness” by Joseph Conrad. The novel consist plentiful amount of contradictions and binary oppositions such us light – dark, civilise – savagery, white – black etc. The novel tells the story of a sailor named Marlow who sent for searching a man named Kurtz as an assignment from his company. Throughout the journey Marlow used to describe Africa as dark and uncivilise and the setting of the story adds to the themes of increasing darkness and savagery.

Here I used to re-read the novel using Deconstruction theory as the tool. Deconstruction theory is created by the French Philosopher Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is a philosophical movement and a literary theory that questions traditional assumptions about binary oppositions. We are looking to reverse the dominant and non-dominant binary oppositions in a deconstructive analyse. Importantly I used to deconstruct the terms such as light-dark, civilise-savagery, white-dark , conqueror-slave, tamed-wiled etc by deconstructing some particular paragraphs from the novel. Through this project I put forward some questions regarding binaries and towards the end of the project I conclude by finding answers for these questions by deconstructing the binaries present in the

novel. The project shows the power of civilised over uncivilised using these binaries and the oppression faced by the Africans due to these binaries. The binaries are mainly born from the discriminations based on gender, colour, race, caste etc. And my finding is that first we want to eradicate these discriminations then only we can find a solution for the binaries present in our society.

For my research on this topic, firstly I used to read the novel “Heart of Darkness” by Joseph Conrad. Then to know about theory I used to refer in the books like “Of Grammatology” by Jacques Derrida and “On Deconstruction Theory and Criticism after Structuralism” by Jonathan Culler. For the application of theory in the novel I used to refer some cites such as springer.com, writeordie.blog.com, perzi.com and litcrit.wordpress.com.

Key words : Deconstruction, Binaries, Opposition, Darkness, Discriminations.

INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction is one of the significant theories in English literature. It was originated by the philosopher Jacques Derrida. The term deconstruction refers to the approaches to understanding the relationship between text and meaning. The word ‘deconstruction’ used by Jacques Derrida was a translation of “Destruktion”, a concept taken from the work of Martin Heidegger.

Deconstruction, as a literary theory, focus on exposing cultural biases in all texts. The readers who engaged in deconstruction analyze the words and sentences to identify the inherent biases and question commonplace interpretations of the text. The common fact in deconstructive criticism is identifying a binary opposition within a literary text and attempting to question these binaries, such as pure – corrupt, black – white, good – evil, etc. These oppositions view western culture as positive or superior, and others are negative and inferior. Derrida aims to erase the boundary between binary oppositions and to question the hierarchy implied by the oppositions. Deconstruction is also a philosophical movement and theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity and truth. Deconstruction refers to the pursuit of the meaning of a sentence into contradictions, the foundations of which are irreversibly complex, unstable or impossible. The focus is on deconstruction, which implies tearing up a sentence to find a unilateral purpose for finding contradictions that

overshadow the harmony of the texts. Postmodernists also use Derrida's deconstruction technique to find the meaning of a sentence rather than to find its meaning.

Deconstruction involves knowing the text closely to prove that any sentence has contradictory meanings rather than being unified and logical. As J. Hillis Miller has explained in an essay named "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure, "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air".

Deconstruction, according to Peter Barry, is divided into three parts - verbal, textual and linguistic. The main elements in deconstruction theory are difference, dissemination, desterrance and geocatastrophe. Through these various stages, we can deconstruct a text into our interpretation, and this deconstruction theory also helps us to re-read, re-think or re-write about the moral, traditional and cultural elements in the text. Thus, we can make a change in society.

"Heart of Darkness is a novella by Polish-English novelist Joseph Conrad. It is a fictional adventuring story. It tells the story of a sailor named Charles Marlow who takes an assignment as a ferry-boat captain in the African interior from a Belgian trading company. In the late nineteenth century, the novel takes place in the Belgian controlled Congo Free State. This novel is regarded as a critique of European colonial rule in Africa and examines the themes of power dynamics and morality. The novel also discusses the horrors of Western colonialism. It is portrayed as a phenomenon that defiles the countries and peoples it exploits and the Western nations that drive it forward.

The novel's central themes are imperialism, racism, colonialism, exploitation, and moral corruption. The Heart of Darkness revolves around the introspective sailor Marlow and his voyage across the Congo to see Kurtz, who is known as an idealist with extraordinary talents. Marlow works as a riverboat captain for a Belgian concern company organized to do business in the Congo. Marlow arrives at Central Station and finds that his steamship has been sunk, and it takes much time to repair it. His interest in Kurtz increased, and Kurtz is rumoured to be ill. Marlow and his companions arrived at Kurtz's Inner Station expecting to find him dead, but a Russian trader informed them that everything was fine. The manager puts the extremely sick Kurtz on the Steamer. A beautiful native, apparently the mistress of Kurtz, appears on the shore and stares at the ship. After the Russian secretly

swears to Marlow; it is revealed that Kurtz ordered the attack on Steamer to convince them that he was dead to turn around and let him into his plans. At night, Kurtz disappears, and Marlow goes out to look for him, only to find him crawling on all fours into the native camp. Marlow stops him and forces him to return to the ship. They went down to the river the following day, but Kurtz's health deteriorated rapidly. While piloting the ship, Marlow listens to Kurtz's speech, and he delivers Marlow a packet of personal documents, ending with a scrolled message that reads, "Eliminate all the brutes".

The Steamer is broken and must be stopped for repairs. Kurtz dies, uttering his last words, "The horror!". Marlow returns to Europe and goes to see Kurtz's fiancé. It has been over a year since Kurtz's death, and she still mourns him, praising him as a model of virtue and achievement. She asks what his last words are, but Marlow cannot break her myths with the truth. Instead, he tells her that Kurtz's last word is her name.

The novel "The Heart of Darkness" explores the complexities of the issues surrounding imperialism. As Marlow travels from Outer Station to Central Station and finally to Inner Station by the river, he encounters torture, cruelty, and slavery scenes. At the very least, the contextual context of the book gives at least a grim picture of colonial enterprises. Accordingly, the novel was understood as the universal exploration of man's inwardness – its corruption, inability, and darkness inherent in it. This novel can be understood through its semiautobiographical relationship to Joseph Conrad's life.

The novella is a short and well-structured narrative, often realistic and satiric in tone, that influenced the development of the short story and novel throughout Europe. In the novel "Heart of Darkness," Joseph Conrad used to convey the anti-colonial sentiments by showing how racism and exploitation are detrimental to all human societies. It is still relevant because it discusses social issues such as social injustice and how people react to injustices like exploitation and racism.

The first chapter is a detailed description of the 'Deconstruction Theory' and includes a summary of the novel 'Heart of Darkness. Then the second chapter is the application of the theory in the novel. The questions I put forward though this project are how the binaries are created, what are the reasons behind the oppressions based on binaries and how we can stop these discriminations.

CHAPTER – I

Introducing Theory and the Novel

Deconstruction Theory

The deconstruction theory originated in France in the late 1960s, when structuralism and existentialism were intellectually active. It was created under the influence of the French philosopher named Jacques Derrida. For the development of this theory, Derrida's primary influence was the theorist, Martin Heidegger. In his book "Being and Time", Heidegger talks about deconstructing preconceived notions of time, history, matter etc., in order to understand them better. Defining the term "deconstruction" can be complex and confusing. Once Derrida said it is confusing because it criticizes the language itself, which is needed to explain it. Deconstruction seems to focus on the idea that language and meaning are often inadequate in conveying the message or idea that a communicator is trying to convey. It is a radical approach to reading. This literary theory is not fully developed and explained as a strategy 'rules for reading, interpreting, and writing'. Deconstruction is at the heart of everything that's followed it and relies on disunity and decentering. Deconstruction does not believe in perfect systems or single explanations. To a deconstructionist, everything is multiple, unstable and without unity. Deconstructive critics look at how plural and multiple-meaning occur in literary works and how those multiple meanings interact. Based on literary theory, it rejects the structural notion that any literary work has a permanent and closed meaning or a center around the rest of the work. In a fundamental sense, deconstruction is associated with specific reading techniques developed by Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and others. Derrida says that deconstruction is not a method but an activity of reading, which implies some new techniques for interpreting literary texts. It is also envisioned as a way to criticize political institutions. The approach of deconstruction is towards the notion of meaning.

Deconstruction is a philosophical movement and the theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about a definite identity and truth, trying to prove that words can only refer to other words and prove that statements about any text subvert their meaning. The critic's claim in the deconstruction is that no meaning can be found in the incompatible virtual texts produced by the reader in search of meaning. Deconstructive critics also look for the way how literary works treat binary oppositions. We are looking to reverse the dominant and

non-dominant binary oppositions in a deconstructive analysis. The assumption that deconstruction makes is that there is no "universal truth" waiting to be found in a text or sign system. A literary critic can criticize and analyze what he or she has said and invite others to criticize. The relationship between signs exists, and they can even produce meaning, but neither relationships nor meaning is ever certain or stable. The texts contain evidence of this instability and uncertainty if we look close enough.

HOW TO DECONSTRUCT A NOVEL?

An article entitled 'How to Deconstruct a Text?' likely assumes a text can be deconstructed and that Deconstruction can be described in a systematic way that applies to all text. Neither of these assumptions may be true. Look for what assumptions the writer makes that already bias the interpretation of the meanings the text discusses.

Look for the tension between the spirit and the letter of the text.

A text rarely succeeds in conveying the author's spirit, while the letter of the text is inconsistent in its intended sense. The spirit behind the title of how to deconstruct a text is helpful, yet despite this optimism, Deconstruction is a difficult concept to understand. At the same time, infamous for how inadequate the tool is, it is ideal for every solution that rarely fits. One occasion is enough. There is potentially a direct contradiction and tension here between what the author intends and what the text says. Such discrepancies may lead to misinterpretations of the literal translations of the meaning, which is automatically considered a distinction between the spirit of the text is essential in any text. However, their revelation empowers the reader and avoids falling into literal perpetual Likewise; a text is itself an attempt to author a reality. There is a tension that inevitably comes with that.

Consider the dynamic and static elements of meaning.

One way to approach the meaning of a text is to realize that dynamics make sense in our heads, which are subjected to constant review, extension, rejection, eligibility or even when the author tries to a physical text has a static nature. As a project for constructing meaning, a sentence or paragraph must end, while a thought process has the potential to continue indefinitely developing or modifying meaning. A sentence produces a reality, an author and even a reader are inevitably deceived because they are dead differently from what they point out. In

short, people are alive, the text is dead, but the text gives the illusion of life. However, some are inevitably lost in the deconstruction process to fill this gap by clarifying how the text comes to life through and through the reader's interpretation and author's manipulations.

Consider how the text is made irrelevant.

Imagine an alien landing on earth. Although the alien will see and speak just like us, the fact of being an alien will bring superb examination and study. By seeing how a text becomes irrelevant, we turn the text into an alien object and bring it to an extreme level of scrutiny there. Instead of trivializing the context of the text, bother to find it. We try to find the limits of meaning in the text, the stage at which it becomes alien to us and finds something new about it.

Consider the individual elements of the text.

It is often the first step in Deconstruction, but it can be misleading, as it suggests meaning is the sum of separate parts and not something more than the sum of the parts. Consider how the text uses different types of words, nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. A sentence describing the world using verbs creates a different world than focusing on nouns or adjectives. Like wisdom, a text that uses verbs such as appear and ponders gives a different sense of reality than verbs such as create and prove. In the deconstruction project, every word is a theory of the world, not a statement of fact. However, more reflective of the author and the reader than the world, Deconstruction aims to make these hypotheses visible.

Look for puns and words with double meanings.

Read and study the text slowly and methodically. Do not assume that a first glance reading will supply one with a text meaning. Instead, dig deep into each word and sentence. Circle any word with multiple meanings or leads to a phrase or a joke. Re-read any sentence with double meanings and try to keep both meanings simultaneously. Use a dictionary to find multiple meanings in a sentence. For example, the word "start" can mean 'to begin' and 'to become started'.

Hunt for overlooked explanations or definitions.

Deconstruction urges a reader to resist the general, ordinary meaning of a text, also known as the privileged meaning of a text. Consider whether a word, phrase or text might have alternative explanations that many readers ignore. Try to expose unconventional ideas and possibilities as one reads.

Push back against the authority of the author.

Resist the temptation to look at the author of a text as a singular expert on the meaning of a given text. Tell oneself that the readings, ideas, translations and misreading are meaningful creations. The act of reading is creative, not passive. It would help if one did not defer to any single authoritative explanation for a text's meaning.

Embrace ambiguity, playfulness and contradictions.

Deconstruction resists the idea that language follows a straightforward formula as it creates meaning. Instead, language is strange, funny, disturbing and paradoxical. Tell oneself that Deconstruction does not involve finding the one true meaning of a work of literature. One might have found that a text means two opposite things simultaneously. It does not mean that the text is wrong or that one has misread the text. Look at the text as presenting a multiplicity of truths. Expect to find jokes, playful puns, disturbing ideas and paradoxes when one deconstructs a text.

Examine the text in another order

The text is usually read from beginning to end. However, linear thoughts can obscure other meanings hidden within the text, such as surprising connections, double meanings and puns. Consider disrupting a linear reading of a text by skimming through it backwards, jumping around from chapter to chapter and reading specific phrases and sentences in isolation. Reading a text in a nonlinear fashion can bring it to life in new and unexpected ways.

Resist western cultural binaries

Deconstruction argues that language contains political claims that disguise their politics. In other words, that seemingly 'straightforward' language is a mark of pernicious and arbitrary power structures. One of the most explicit ways cultural binaries create complex hierarchies. Deconstruction can help make visible certain

problematic invisible assumptions in language and culture. In order to deconstruct a text, learn how to get beyond a simplistic system of binaries that culture creates and that language might try to uphold. Try to see where there are shades of grey, where seeming opposites are very closely related, or where the superior side of the binary system might be inferior. These binaries include men vs women, culture vs nature, soul vs body etc.

Apply Deconstruction to any text.

If one deconstructs a text, he/she will probably apply this method to a literary text such as a poem, play, short story or novel. However, Deconstruction can be applied to any text or any speech act. Movies, advertisements, political speeches, how-to articles, and billboards can all be deconstructed too. Look at the world around one like one made of deeply meaningful text that one has the power to decode if one takes the time.

Distil one's observations into a claim.

If one is deconstructing a text as a part of an assignment, he/she might have to write up the findings. It can be not easy because academic papers must be clear, organized, and decisive, whereas a deconstructed paradoxical and disordered. Nevertheless, one can still create a cohesive argument out of a deconstructed text.

Summary of the novel “Heart of Darkness”

The novel “Heart of Darkness” was written by Joseph Conrad. The novel begins on the deck of the British ship Nellie, anchored on the coast of the themes. The central characters, such as the anonymous narrator, the Director of Companies, the Accountant and Marlow, sit in silence. Marlow began to talk about his journey in a steamboat up the Congo River. The rest of the story is the narration of his tale. As a young man, Marlow desires to visit Africa and pilot a steamboat on the Congo River. After learning about the large ivory company based in Congo, Marlow applied for a post and received it. He leaves Europe in a French steamer. Marlow witnesses the scenes of brutality, chaos and waste at the Outer Station of the Company in Congo. Marlow speaks with an Accountant and learns about Kurtz, a remarkable agent working in the interior. Marlow reaches the Company’s Central Station, where he gets the news that the steamboat he is supposed to pilot up the Congo was wrecked at the bottom of the river, and he has to wait at the Central Station until his boat is repaired. Then Marlow meets the Company’s Manager, who tells him more about Kurtz. According to the Manager, Kurtz is supposedly ill, and the Manager

feigns great concern over Kurtz's health. Marlow also meets the Brickmaker, a man whose position seems unnecessary because he does not have all the materials for making bricks. One night, as Marlow is lying on the deck of his salvaged steamboat, he overhears the Manager and his uncle talking about Kurtz. Marlow concludes that the Manager fears that Kurtz is trying to steal his job. Finally, Marlow's boat is repaired, and he leaves the Central Station to bring relief to Kurtz. Approximately fifty miles below Kurtz's Inner Station, they find a hut of reeds, a woodpile and an English book named "An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship". Before reaching there, Marlow's steamboat is attacked by a shower of arrows. The whites fire rifles into the jungle while Marlow tries to navigate the boat. A native helmsman is killed by a large spear and thrown overboard. Marlow feels disappointed now that he will never get the chance to speak to Kurtz because he assumed that the same natives who are attacking them have already attacked the Inner Station.

Marlow reaches the Inner Station and notices Kurtz's building through his telescope. There is no fence but a series of posts ornamented with "balls" that Marlow later learns were natives' heads. A Russian trader and disciple of Kurtz named "The Harlequin" by Marlow approaches the steamboat and tells them that Kurtz is still alive. Marlow learns from him that the natives did not want Kurtz to be taken away. That is why they attacked the steamboat. Suddenly, Marlow sees a group of native men approaching him, carrying Kurtz on a stretcher. Kurtz is taken inside a hut where Marlow approaches him and gives him some letters. Marlow notices that Kurtz is frail, sick and bald. Then Marlow sees native women approach the steamer; the Harlequin hints to Marlow that the woman is Kurtz's mistress. At midnight, Marlow awakens to the sound of a big drum. Marlow searches Kurtz and finds that he is escaping by crawling away on all fours. When he comes upon Kurtz, he warns him to run, but Marlow helps Kurtz to his feet and carries him back to the cabin. The next day, they leave the Inner Station, and as they move further away from the Inner Station, Kurtz's health deteriorates. At one point, the steamboat breaks down, and Kurtz gives Marlow a packet of letters and a photograph for safekeeping, fearing that the Manager will take them. Now Kurtz is lying in the pilothouse and waiting for his death. Marlow hears Kurtz whisper his final words, "The horror! The horror!". After his death, Marlow reaches Europe and a Company official approaches and asks for the packets of paper to which Kurtz had entrusted him. Marlow refuses, but he gives them a copy of Kurtz's report to "The Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs with Kurtz's chilling postscript. Marlow's finally

duty to Kurtz is to visit his intended and deliver Kurtz's letter and her portrait to her. She asks him to repeat Kurtz's final words when he meets her. Marlow lies and says that his last word was her name, and he leaves from there.

The anonymous narrator on board the Nellie then resumes his narrative. The Director of Companies makes an innocuous remark about the tide, and the narrator looks out at the overcast sky and the Thames, which seems to lead "into the heart of an immense darkness".

CHAPTER – II

Application of Deconstructive Theory in the Novel

The novel "Heart of Darkness" contains plentiful amounts of contradictions and binary oppositions that we can deconstruct and expose as a new meaning. When we read the novel, the readers get every meaning in each province. We try to re-read the novel using the deconstruction theory as the tool. In this novel, Joseph Conrad has demolished many binary oppositions such as light-dark, truth-myth, tamed-wild etc.

In this novel, Joseph Conrad used the common motif of light, which represents that truth and goodness as a whole is inverted and instead representative of darkness and deceit. So I would like to deconstruct the terms light and dark. For that, let us look into the sentence taken from the novel "Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more somber every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun". The binaries in this sentence are the darkening of the dust, personified as 'gloom, brooding and sombre'. The word "Darkness" has a negative association and is associated with the terms such as evil, ignorance and fear. The sun represents light with positive associations such as wisdom, strength and goodness. The word 'gloom' is derived from a Middle English term called 'gloumen', which means 'become dark'. The word 'brood' was from the Old English term 'brod', which means 'fetus or hatchling' and the Old High German word 'brout', which means 'that which is hatched by heat'. The next word, 'sombre,' was from the French 'sombre', which means 'dark, gloomy' and also from the Proto-Indo-European word with 'blind and dark'. Based on these definitions, the sentence would be deconstructed as "The stretching darkness of west is trangled, blinded and born from heat and light of the approaching sun". The point of this passage is that the traditional concepts of light and dark as good and evil become softened in

this passage. The sun is portrayed as the victor of the battle but paradoxically, it leaves its power to the night and the night, while choked and blinded by the approaching sun is birthed into its fullness. So that giving strength to your enemy does not mean that the battle is truly won and the birth is not associated with pain, blindness or strangulation.

"I known 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 teemed ready to listen without mental reservation, without a thought for herself"

In this passage, using deconstruction to assign the truth to sunlight, and light itself, allows the reversal to occur. The apparent reversal of the light is darkness; while it does not translate in the physical sense, it translates well in the metaphysical sense, how Marlow leaves her in the darkness. Instead of revealing the actual truth about how Kurtz's final words were darker and more precautionary, Marlow made her name as Kurtz's last words before surrendering to death. Because deconstruction of light can no longer be seen as pure truth, it no longer represents good or honesty. For Kurtz's wife, the truth was shrouded in darkness and not to see the light of day. She believes what she has heard or wanted to hear, and Marlow immediately goes his way, burying the truth inside after doing more harm than good and making everything seem much brighter than it was.

In this paragraph, Marlow describes the native helpers:

"And I saw something retraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had comes into play there. I looked at them with a swift quickening of interest – not because it occurred to me I might be eaten by them before very long, though I own to you that just then I perceived – in a new light, as it were - how unwholesome the pilgrims looked, and I hoped, yes, I positively hoped that my aspect was not so – what shall I say? So – unappetising... Restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear – or some kind of primitive honor?". (Page no.42) In a deconstructionist reading of this passage, what stands out is the binary and privileging of white men vs natives. As a white, European man, Marlow vs his African helpers, and the apparent separation between the two. Marlow makes many unflattering assumptions about his helpers, and when they show

positive traits, he almost does not understand how they could be good. This passage also addresses Lyotard's idea of the metanarrative supporting the legitimacy of power. Legitimacy allows morality to become a reality. Power shores up power. Marlow was raised with the idea, with the metanarrative, that he, as a white man, was better than the native Africans; his realisation on the boat that they are more alike than he thought undermines this narrative and the legitimacy of the power of the company, and the whites in general. Deconstruction theory brings themes of racism, white narcissism, and the roots of power in the Heart of Darkness.

"Poor fool! If he had only left that shutter alone. He had no restraints, no restraint – just like Kurtz – a tree swayed by the wind. As soon as had put on a dry pair of slippers, I dragged him out, after first jerking the spear out of his side, which operation I confess, I performed with my eyes shut tight. His heels leaped together over the little doorstep desperately. Oh! He was heavy, heavy; heavier than any man on earth, I should imagine. Then without more ado I tipped him overboard. The current snatched him as though he had been a wisp of grass, and I saw the body roll over twice before I lost sight of it"

We can deconstruct the binary terms civilised and uncivilised by analysing this paragraph because we know that Kurtz was a civilised man from Europe. However, when he began to live with the African natives, he slowly converted into uncivilised in the jungle. Europeans brought the light to civilise; it actually caused more harm than good and destroyed a culture. While white men invading Africa refer to the natives as savages, their cruelty and lack of regard for human lives make them the savages and prove that one cannot civilise savagery without resorting to savagery oneself. The binary opposition at work is civilisation and savagery. The natives are often referred to as savages and the other derogatory slurs for Africans. They are beaten, left to starve and enslaved for the company's ivory hunt. The book paints them as mysterious tribal people whose behaviour is unpredictable. However, it is the men who oppress them who are the savages in actuality by treating them inhumanly and must resort to savage-like behaviour to achieve it. As Marlow finds a way to transition to his story of the events in Africa, he tries to differentiate himself from the men he refers to as "conquerors". This term refers to the explorers, missionaries, and employees of the company that journey to Africa with Marlow in their quest for imperialism. The newly enlightened Buddha Marlow continues to explain the true nature of colonisation and the violence that it brings. He argues that it is the idea of colonisation that redeems their actions and makes them seem noble.

In the novel, none of the events brought on by colonisation ever bring any good. In *Heart of Darkness*, a proper civilisation is any society that abides by white social norms. In trying to achieve this with the natives, the white men must resort to cruel behaviour inexcusable in European society. Marlow remembers their actions as "just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it build...".

Marlow says the men were not colonists. The difference between a colonist and a conquerer is that a colonist attempts to establish a society on the new territory while a conquerer sees to overthrow the residing civilisation. Marlow's mention of Kurtz reminds him of how savage the idea of colonisation is. He says of Kurtz, "The utter savagery had closed around him.". Kurtz's attempt to civilise the natives made him into what he was trying to change.

The phrase "closed around him" suggests that escaping his fate was inevitable as the figurative walls caved in on him. Kurtz's character directly opposes the helmsman that Marlow grows to value during his time on the river.

The native helmsman, who is still considered a savage by Marlow, is the only character to ever near the title of civilised. Marlow even misses him when he is killed during an attack and refers to their relationship. However, during his exposition of Kurtz, Marlow recalls all of the negative aspects of Kurtz's psyche in his final moments and remarks that it results from his trying to colonise or civilise the natives. While the actions of the explorers are a part of the goal to civilise the natives into adopting European culture, their genocide of a people is what makes them the true savages instead of the threatened natives that they instead referred to as savages.

"I tried to break the spell – the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness – that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of weird incantations; this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations... And I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear – concentrated, it is true, upon himself with horrible intensity, yet clear; and therein was my only chance – barring, of course, the killing him there and then, which wasn't so good, on account of unavoidable noise. But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had

- for my sins, I suppose – to go through the ordeal of looking into myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief, too. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraints, no faith, and no fear yet struggling blindly with itself".

Examining the passage above in a deconstructionist lens, there are several oppositions suggested in the excerpt which could be examined: civilised/uncivilised, sane/insane, tamed/wild, pure/corrupt, moral/immoral, rationality/instinct, or the more significant oppositions which these all allude to, good/evil. Marlow listens to Kurtz grieve for his "immense plans" and takes this to affirm Kurtz's aspirations of aristocracy: "Your success in Europe is assured in any case". Within this context, Marlow assumes Kurtz's "final burst of sincerity" is a mourning of the sacrifice of his career, engagement and wealth for a strange, predatory reign over the indigenous people of the land.

Marlow believes the isolation of the wilderness has put Kurtz under a "spell", having "beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspiration". The implication is that Kurtz's behaviour in the jungle is entirely uncivilised. Had Kurtz held steadfast to his supposedly civilised principles, he would not have been torn apart by regret and shame in his final hours and may have lived a great deal longer. However, Marlow's assumptions present many problems.

First, Marlow defines Kurtz's sanity at the moment quite plainly: "I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear". Marlow weakens his own argument by portraying Kurtz as a rational, sane and intelligible human; he is not, therefore, insane. Kurtz has enough cognisance to "struggle blindly" with an issue which Marlow implies as relating to his behaviour in the wilderness, suggesting the presence of a moral paradigm. So, though he may have succumbed to immoral behaviour, the suggestion is that Kurtz is a moral person, now weighed by the gravity of his decisions. This would weaken the suggestion of the good/evil binary attached to Kurtz by proxy.

However, the fatal bow to Marlow's observation is the colonisers' occupation of the continent. Marlow critiques Kurtz's action in the jungle, his baseless governance over the indigenous people, his tactics of manipulation and influence, the leveraging of resources and power to intimidate, enact violence, overthrow existing hierarchies, etc. As a result, Marlow brands Kurtz as insane, irrational, uncivilized, and evil. However, every single one of

these actions is reflected in every trade which affords Kurtz his resources: his wealth, his connections, his status, his career, his fiancé and so on. These are the things Marlow believes Kurtz laments in the throes of death.

They are the things which sparked Marlow's interest in Kurtz. They are the very source of power which arguably compelled Kurtz to his current predicament. They are also composed of the Western European socio-cultural signifiers that suggest Kurtz was once a prosperous and, therefore, good person, and would have continued to be, had he kept to that path. However, had Kurtz kept to his accepted path, he would have participated in all the same activities for which he is demonised, even without his pretentious and violent "reign" over the indigenous people. The looting and aggressive colonisation of the African continent to enrich the European economy constituted baseless governance over indigenous people, exploitation and manipulation of a vulnerable population, and the leveraging of resources to intimidate, enact violence, and overthrow. Kurtz is merely deemed evil, insane, or uncivilised because he did not participate in these activities in a way that held to the sponsoring organisation's expectations. Therefore, Marlow's implied qualification of Kurtz as evil, insane or uncivilised does not hold up; the performative manner of these same actions is all that concerns the civilised group. The civil, sane or reasonable population participates in the exact same behaviour as Kurtz; the behaviour is merely hidden behind a corporate umbrella. I chose to examine this passage through a deconstructionist lens for a few reasons. First, Marxist theory is heavily criticised for its lack of intersectionality; the oppositions examined through this view are generally only bourgeoisie/ proletariat, ruling class/ working class, or oppressor/oppressed. Though this could provide some compelling insights into the power dynamics of the narrative, we felt that this piece, precisely because those structures are inherently problematic.

CONCLUSION

This project attempts to deconstruct the binary oppositions and other contradictions that exist in our society using the novel "Heart of Darkness". The term darkness usually denoted evil, fear, and danger, but Joseph Conrad gives a new meaning to this term through this novel. Two contrasting symbols of light are used to present ideas of goodness and truth. However, in the Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad uses light and the idea of enlightenment to portray how imperialists justified bringing darkness to Africa, using it as a symbol of knowledge and deceit. Additionally, using darkness as a symbol of truth and reality reflects the attitude of imperialists toward their

mission in Africa. By justifying their journey as a way to civilise and enlighten the Africans, they truly brought destruction from which Africa has still not recovered. He also talks about different binary oppositions such as white/black, tamed/wild and likewise. Deconstruction in this novel helped us to rethink these binaries and made a change in our thoughts. This project shows the power of civilised people over uncivilised ones using the binaries and the oppressions faced by the African due to these binaries. These binaries are mainly born from discrimination based on colour, race and other dehumanising factors. So that first we want to eradicate these discriminations, then we can make a change in these binaries.

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