

The Power of Tides, The Impulses of Mankind:  
A Marxist and Cultural Materialist View of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

By Mark A. Doherty

Joseph Conrad drank from the same molecules of water that exist on Earth today. A few drops of dark ink might not have clouded his glass, yet he seemed to sense that within another hundred years, the black droplets would continue, and the pristine waters, our waters, would be clouded. They are the waters of humanity and culture. Sieving Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through some evolving literary theoretical perspectives we can visualize a new clarity of intent—we can visualize also a clear path open to our own future. From the Marxist view, the inherently flawed capitalistic/political system during Conrad's time has essentially not changed—has not altered or improved—which highlights a covert theme in *Heart of Darkness* calling for mankind's return to a more naturalistic archetype rather than just simply an overt call to halt imperialistic injustices. Employing Cultural Materialism theory to Conrad furthers this premise by encouraging us to view his work from today's world political viewpoint and by visualizing both Conrad and his novel's characters as creating unique perspectives on history. Easily a hundred and fifty years ahead of his time, Conrad's work urges us today to consider a political climate closer to that of idealistic socialism than our current wildly disparate capitalistic reality. A contemporary holistic view of *Heart of Darkness* might set up four clear social and political contrasts: flawed capitalism versus a new naturalism, covert versus overt themes, a perspective of 1900 versus today, and patriarchal versus matriarchal culture. Rather than claim, as many do, that there is little new to say about such a canonized author and work, this perspective proposes that Conrad's legacy demonstrates to readers of today how masculine hubris and the elitism of capitalism might be replaced with a more balanced, naturalistic, and sustainable human condition.

### **Flawed Capitalism versus A New Naturalism**

There should be little argument that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* indeed challenges the capitalistic-driven imperialism of his time. Marlow, Kurtz, the inner station manager, and most of the other key "white" characters in the novel come from the same bourgeois socioeconomic status. Essentially all of Europe played a role in the conquest of the Congo by virtue of the fact that all Europe was involved in some sort of capitalistic colonization, and thus all contribute even if by default to the atrocities facilitated by the worst members of their socioeconomic class and culture. An element more interesting is the opposing ideology Conrad reveals through Marlow as we see the black natives. If we look at ideology from 1960's Structuralist Marxist Philosopher Louis Althusser's view, ". . . it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects . . . the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology . . . (698). Therefore we as readers, either in 1900 or now, participate with Conrad/Marlow in ascertaining and perhaps even appreciating the culture and ideology of the natives. We see that the natives are cannibals, yet we see elements of intellect, reserve, and restraint. They don't eat Marlow when they are starving due to their rotten rhino meat. We know they are worshipers, but they seem to worship charisma over materialistic elements like ivory or even currency. And we see them as possessing a tremendous raw power, evidenced by Kurtz' jungle princess when she appears at the boat, and evidenced by Marlow's earlier discussion saying, "—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman" (Conrad 108). From this point then we might as readers be asked to become judges of morality and values. We are given two radically different

value systems juxtaposed like night and day against each other and left with “. . . one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences” (70). Our concepts of morality are also challenged when Marlow describes Kurtz as, “. . . with moral ideas of some sort” (102) when he went out there. We are forced to ask ourselves, what sort of morality would allow the level of indiscretion Kurtz exhibited?

Therefore the challenge to capitalism is combined with a glimpse at other cultures and other value systems and left for us as readers, both then and now, to gauge which elements of native culture might be important. Readers are compelled to look at what they value, the dark and natural jungle and its indigenous peoples, or the manufactured world of capitalistic society. In short, do we idolize “ivory” or do we idolize “charisma” or do we develop a non-idolizing ideology? Man versus nature has been the mantra of modern civilization, but Conrad leaves the window open for us to consider man *with* nature.

The certainty that capitalism of Conrad’s time is flawed is clearly established by Marx and Hegel from the European continent, but also was being discussed even earlier by thinkers such as James Madison from the American continent. First we must take a glimpse at a few of Marx’ precepts. When Marx says, “There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx 667). he is beginning to outline the fatal flaws and assumptions behind capitalism. Marx goes on to demonstrate the vicious circle capitalistic society falls into when he says, “Capital presupposes wage labor; wage labor presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other” (664). Conrad’s Marlow obliquely echoes this sentiment when he says, “I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly” (82).

Yet even earlier in the story he sets up an antagonistic view of the imperialism-driven capitalism when he says,

I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulcher. Prejudice no doubt. I had no difficulty finding the Company's offices. It was the biggest thing in the town, and everybody I met was full of it. They were going to run an oversea empire, and make no end of coin by trade. (Conrad 73)

However, long before the 1900s, Madison in Colonial America wrote extensively on the early flaws in capitalism:

But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society.

. . . under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. . . . It is in vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests and render them all subservient to the public good. (Madison 1-2)

Indeed, there is much evidence to show the shortfalls, the evils, and the negative impacts of capitalism in and before Conrad's time. Socialism, and a more equal distribution of wealth has also failed in all worldly experiments thus far, but perhaps the idea is still sound—certainly more sound than the capitalistic imperialism of Conrad's time.

Important to keep in mind, however, is to realize that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is still being read today. And flawed capitalism, albeit with a new form of atrocities, is still as insidious

today. We are reminded as a culture of the ravages of industrialization on the natural world which in essence have become the new atrocities. Extinction of species, depletion of resources, and contamination of waters all evidence this. The web is replete with evidence written; bookstores have entire aisles dedicated to the issues. Along with this, the human injustices still prevail, but they are much more subtle, hidden within that capitalistic system that drives most of the world. Let us take income disparity as one example. Writer, speaker and former vice president Al Gore informs us that:

In terms of annual income, the top one percent now receive almost 26 percent of all U.S. income annually; up from 2 percent just a quarter century ago. While the after tax income of the average American claimed only 21 percent over the last twenty-five years, the income of the top 0.1 percent increased over the same period by 400 percent. (Gore 10).

Or, as Louis Althusser stated regarding his concept of interpellation, “It accounts for the operation of control structures not maintained by physical force, and hence for the perpetuation of a social set-up which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of the few” (158-159). Again, the modern ravages of capitalism are revealed.

Now let us return to Conrad, and let us look at his views of The Congo and other untouched, untrammelled places in the world. Early on Conrad’s Marlow sets readers up for many and varied images extolling the wildness of the world. “At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, ‘When I grow up I will go there.’ . . . –a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. (Conrad 71) As the story moves forward, words like *wild vitality, appealing, suggestive, great and invincible, mystery, greatness, amazing*

*reality*, and *free* are employed to characterize the undeveloped world of The Congo. Conrad demonstrates through his protagonist that he values the wilderness and the wild humanity subsisting there. A modern reader of this text might well envision the need for humanity to return to an older set of values, one forged from a pre-industrial cottage industry society and one which balanced more equally the man-to-nature interface. Of course, it would be impossible, barring global catastrophe, to return to the preindustrial world; however, a new form of naturalism might well grow out of Conrad's awe and appreciation of the jungle, the native cultures, and the literal heart of darkness—the blank space on the map.

### **Covert versus Overt Themes**

Another important aspect regarding theories on *Heart of Darkness* involves a discussion of the covert versus the overt themes evident in the text. The most obvious overt theme, the indictment of imperialistic capitalism, is however too general in nature. There were aspects of industrialized culture such as class distinction, race, and scientific materialism that Conrad was undoubtedly asking his readers to evaluate. As would be expected, the covert aspects of this novel run deeply into the realms of morality, sociology, and even transcendentalism. They are difficult if not impossible to prove; yet when analyzed they bring forth some unique perspectives worthy of discussion.

Critics and editors Frederick Karl and Marvin Magalaner offer insight which nicely introduces this discussion of covert and overt themes. They write:

His (Conrad's) great power, like George Eliot's, lay in his ability to fashion strength of will into moral idea; and his life's work was devoted to 'seeing' the moral idea from as many aspects as possible, until the idea became, as it were, the

thing itself. In his desire to make the reader 'see,' Conrad placed himself in the main line of modern novelists who dramatize what their predecessors often merely verbalized. (46)

One of the first elements Conrad wishes for readers to see overtly is class distinction. Virtually all the white characters Marlow interacts with are from various echelons of the middle classes—the knitting women, the company men, the pilgrims, the doctor, and even the men on the cruising yawl. Conrad was acutely aware of his own social class status which began for him rooted in the Polish aristocracy. Then later he shipped out as a seaman, working and living with a class of people probably closer to the bourgeois emerging from early capitalism in England (although seamen seem to be in a class all their own). Reflected in the text of *Heart of Darkness* we find Conrad critically examining the socio-economic class of the English bourgeois of the 1900s. Conrad via Marlow shows little or no respect for either the women (knitting black wool) or the men (the agents, company directors, the "clean shaved man, with an official manner,"). He also describes London near the end as the sepulchral city." (Conrad 154-55). And he does all this aboard the cruising yawl The Nellie taking on the posture of "A Buddha." This seems to be obvious, overt criticism, or at the very least lack of praise, for this middle social class. Ironically, It was that same class that precipitated the rise of the novel thereby giving Conrad a platform to criticize the very social class that participated so hugely in the abuses in places like The Congo.

The abuses, for the most part, were directed at what society of the era deemed an inferior race—a race of black people. Again, there is clearly an overt theme on Conrad's part. Conrad sees humanity and positive traits in these people who Marlow describes as, "They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them" (107). Or he says, ". . . and the men were—No, they

were not inhuman” (108). And later he summarizes, “And I saw that something restraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had come into play there” (116). Additionally, one of these blacks is Marlow’s key crew members, the fireman who he praises as devoted and well-trained. Yet we must put Conrad’s book into the scientific cultural context in order to more fully appreciate Conrad’s brilliance and awareness as a thinker. Science of that era established connections in human genetics from Gregor Mendel’s plant genetic research. “From 1901-1904 various biologists, notably Sutton and Montgomery in America and de Vries and Boveri on the continent, pointed out that the behavior of Mendel’s factors corresponded to that of the chromosomes during the production and union of the egg and sperm” (Mason 532). Conrad knew, either intuitively or by an awareness of 1900s contemporary science, that genetics was beginning to unravel the mysteries of race and skin color, that all bets based on myths of inferiority were off, and that human beings should be judged as individuals. It was not the skin color nor the geographic location that drove human nature, but rather the socioeconomic and political forces to which all humans could fall prey. This *valuing* of humanity is captured best by Conrad when Marlow describes the first natives he sees traveling by canoe:

But they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were a great comfort to look at. For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts; (Conrad 79).

Indeed this is an example of Conrad as a novelist being able to dramatize events, ideas, and values rather than simply verbalizing them—an overt plea to value all humanity.

This then leads to a brief discussion of scientific materialism, a concept becoming predominant also during the early 1900s. Scottish born philosopher Hugh Elliot wrote in 1919,



“An age of science is necessarily an age of materialism; ours is a scientific age, and it may be said with truth that we are all materialists now” (Elliot 306). Conrad openly refutes the merits of materialism at various times throughout the novel. When discussing the Eldorado Expedition he asserts, “To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in the burglars breaking into a safe” (Conrad 101). Elliot continues his discussion with, “Scientific materialism warmly denies that there exists any such thing as purpose in the Universe, or that events have any ulterior motive or goal to which they are striving” (Elliot 308). Yet Imperialism itself, as we shall see later, harbors its own ulterior motives. Conrad also attacks materialism more subtly by viewing the driving force of the Congo takeover, ivory, as colored yellow—the color of disease, the color of the blinding sun.

Covert intent in *Heart of Darkness* is perhaps a bit more nebulous and open to individual interpretation. This fact adds to the modern allure of the work, for new readers will be able to imagine what Conrad might be saying inconspicuously, even subversively. While Conrad was writing against the social grain, he was also essentially "producing" a type of history, one based in social consciousness which asked readers of his time (and of ours as well) to evaluate the costs of imperialistic or capitalistic motives and to evaluate levels of human morality. He was speaking for, and giving us a historical account of the *other side of imperialism*, the atrocities, the abuses et al. This is reflected in many of the non-fiction texts written by others during Conrad's time. But nothing preserves history better than a great novel which becomes canonized. Due to the very fact that Conrad's work has been read and studied by so many, the "other side" of the history of imperialism has also been canonized.

Another covert possibility for this text is that Conrad wished for society of his time and of ours to appreciate the jungle and its raw power on a transcendental level. Marlow displays a

clear sense of awe and wonder at the vast and virgin wilderness. Moments of these lucid descriptions are also connected with philosophical judgments or questions about humankind. For instance, Marlow asks, “—how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man’s untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman—by the way of silence—utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbor can be heard whispering of public opinion?” (Conrad 126). If one is open to it, Conrad is presenting philosophies not unlike the transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau. Taking Raymond Williams’ view that “structures of feeling” oppose the status quo (Barry 177), we can impute both meaning and mystery to Conrad’s text. Conrad writes, “I wondered whether the stillness on the face of the immensity looking at us two were meant as an appeal or as a menace. What were we who had stayed in here? Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us” (Conrad 96). While King Leopold is trying to make his mark on European society, while most of Europe and America is formulating capitalistic aims and futures, Conrad is writing about the power and the mystery of the untrammelled and relatively unpeopled wilderness. He is writing about native Africans, cannibals, who exercise more restraint and respect than white people (the rotten rhino meat and starving natives on the boat that do not eat Marlow). These descriptions, and others from the text, speak covertly to the reader in terms of the power and the mystery of nature and those who live close to it. Even today, the novel holds a unique view of nature, one that society could greatly benefit from adopting.

### **1900 versus Today**

What is history? Who writes it? How do we learn it? Most would view these as mundane, even inane rhetorical questions, but a literary theorist who subscribes to Cultural

Materialism might answer these questions with a forwardly unique and unabashed manner that would redefine the rhetoric of both history and the novella. If we look to Raymond Williams' 'structures of feeling' in which one looks to the ". . . meanings and values as they are 'lived and felt' " (Barry 177), we can interpret Conrad from both his era of the early 1900s and our era as modern readers. Conrad's work may seem "dark" from the standpoint of antagonistic views of culture, but a shift in the paradigm of perspective can give us a truly optimistic view of what Conrad is valuing—what Conrad is urging those of his time, and ours, to perceive in the face of the industrialized and capitalistic world. Due to the canonization of Conrad, and due to the fact that so many have read his work, the work has taken on a life of its own and essentially helped to write, even create the history of his time where we see 'structures of feeling' that might not appear in other time period texts. By first revisiting that history, and then by viewing that history through the lens of today's lightning quick social alterations of the technological era, we can use the past to read, and hopefully to guide the future. And so we see that history is not the textbook, the didactic lecture, the old letters and journals. History, that is *meaningful* history, is the great literature that has survived and which taught us to see meanings and values from the past, and then teaches us to visualize applications for those same meanings and values in the present.

When Marlow speaks aboard *The Nellie* he says, "What redeems it (the conquest of Earth) 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 . . ." (Conrad 70) The ellipses, and the often ambiguous tale that follows about Marlow's excursion into the heart of The Congo leaves the words, *idea* and *redeems* undefined. Throughout the text we see him lambast the imperialism of Belgium and its atrocities, and we see him present tremendous binaries and oppositions which portray the wilderness and its native

cultures as glamorous, mysterious, and enticing. Conrad is of course known for his antagonistic views here. The text, and the historical writing surrounding it, attests to the reality of what happened in The Congo. Thus the *idea* Conrad is implying through Marlow allows us to think about the alternative—to take the antagonist’s position. The binaries make us focus on the mysterious and magical aspects of The Congo and the world in general of the early 1900s.

Marlow says,

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map . . .(71)

Yes, the blinding white sunshine of Imperialism, Christianity, missions and more overtook The Congo, but Conrad leaves us with an idea about the original beauty, the silence, the mystery of the place. And *redemption*? If there was no redemption for the conquest of The Congo, then perhaps there is redemption in conceiving what was lost, in conceptualizing that native world as a unique and special world in its own right. Conrad was urging readers to look at a different value system and to appreciate a unique and different world—the world of native Africa. The interaction of Marlow and the natives, the restraint Marlow uses when not delivering Kurtz’ last true words to his Intended, and his unwillingness to give up critical information to the company agent afterwards can all be seen as positive change. They represent the ability for one man to effect change, to alter the course of intervention even if it is a slight altering. And that effect can take place in the context of today as well as in 1900. As we relive the values and meanings from *Heart of Darkness*, we might well ask ourselves which elements of Conrad’s reality apply today. We might become aware of a new realm of social injustices and lack of awareness existing in our

own symbolic “Congo.” For instance, the current world struggles of income disparity and shrinking resources seem to eerily echo Conrad’s past.

In addition to giving readers a different view of his time, Conrad was essentially "producing" a type of history, one based in social consciousness which asked readers of his time (and of ours as well) to evaluate the costs of imperialistic or capitalistic motives and to evaluate levels of human morality. Again, values become key. He was speaking for, and giving us a historical account of the other side of imperialism, the atrocities, the abuses et al. This is also reflected in many of the non-fiction texts written by others during Conrad's time. Maurice Hennessy wrote the following in 1908 in his brief history of The Congo:

This, of course, was another name for slavery. The so-called taxpayers were treated like prisoners; their work was carried out under the supervision of armed sentries, and, as can be easily imagined, the system lent itself to all kinds of tyranny, brutality, and subsequent reprisals by the natives. In one concession alone one hundred and forty-two Africans were killed. The spirit of bitterness and hatred generated in the people was quite terrifying, but little could be done about it as there was not enough control in the area to prevent the various agents from misusing their power. (Hennessy 81)

On one hand, we have Hennessy’s factual historical account. It’s buried deep in the little-read annals of pure history. On the other hand, we have Conrad. It is easy to see which one has more power to shape history as we have known it, and as it evolves.

Naturally, not only Africa has seen immense change and impact from human civilization, colonization, imperialism, and now capitalism. There are only vestiges of the true wilderness remaining, and only distant cultural memories from indigenous and native cultures. As a

consequence, when we read *Heart of Darkness* and other canonized works from our historical past, we envision both what existed during those time, and we visualize what has been lost. If we return to Williams' structures of feeling we might ask ourselves, in light of reading Conrad, what do we value most today? What are we blinded by? What is the truth? What is the darkness of earth now, and why might it *not actually be dark or bad*? It is interesting that Marlow's very essence opposes the status quo of his time as he sat aboard The Nellie ". . . 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—" (69) This image alone gives us, as Barry states, ". . . a source of oppositional values. . ." (177) and perhaps even hope, even optimism about the ability for thinkers of all times to re-value our world and make changes. Obviously, the non-fiction historical texts of the time period do not reflect Conrad's sentiment, and even today, despite tremendous efforts to conserve nature during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the predominant sentiment is capitalistic, protestant, male dominant, and resource exploitation motivated. In short, Conrad was diametrically opposed to the political ideologies of his time, and even by today's standards, his work can be construed as oppositional as well. Yet as long as great works like *Heart of Darkness* are read and revered, realistic views of history will live on, urging the modern world to foray into its own dark places where with trembling fingers we turn out the light and find a new luminescence guiding our values, lighting our way.

### **Patriarchal versus Matriarchal Views**

For over 2,000 years a patriarchal archetype has dominated world culture and society, and though perhaps nearing change, it still dominates today. The rough, physical takeover of territories ran rampant up until Conrad's time and up even into WW II. Extension of power and

dominion by acquisition or political and economic control is defined as colonialism, or as “the system in which a country maintains foreign colonies for their economic exploitation” (Webster). Conrad identifies this early on in the novella stating first, “Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had 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” (Conrad 67). The words *sacred fire* imply Christianity, and Christianity is solely a patriarchal, male dominated world. Conrad continues with, “The conquest of 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” (70). And of course, this identifies the source of the atrocities of The Congo and other places on earth, including the Native Americans or the Australian Aborigines. Throughout *Heart of Darkness* themes like this are reiterated and male dominated in the discussion, as in, “For if all men harbor darkness in their heart, why try to save them? Why even pity them?” (Conrad) Readers view the evils of a patriarchal world here, but also see Conrad as extremely negative regarding history and culture, both from antiquity and from his contemporary views. And yet there seems to be a narrow window of hope, of positivity in this text. We have already identified how Conrad shows potential optimism because Marlow did not destroy Kurtz’ Intended with the cold hard truth, but rather employed a more gentle approach. Furthermore, the very relating of the tale from aboard The Nellie after the fact shows a reflective, meditative man who is essentially giving us a history of The Congo region as well as a lens by which to judge that history and perhaps work toward making a future that is not so flawed—a positive view again. Celebrating the wildness of Africa and its native peoples in contrast to development, Christianity, and commerce is still in many ways a conflicting world view today, still timely and worthy of debate and discussion. Conrad has also influenced writers like William Golding and

Barbara Kingsolver, and from the Cultural Materialistic view, these authors portray similar polylogical historical views.

Perhaps if we look to the women in Conrad's tale, we see an inkling of changing viewpoint. We see what might even be an unconscious idea beginning to form in the Author's mind. It is a view implying that an alternative world might balance the forces of men and women as well as the forces of white and black, man and nature, capitalism and a new political paradigm. Let us first look at two of our own contemporary thinkers on our current state of capitalism and democracy. Gore qualifies the current state of centuries of male-dominated leadership by saying, "With the future of human civilization hanging in the balance, both democracy and capitalism are badly failing to serve the deepest interests of humankind" (314). In 1984 Audre Lorde wrote, "The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us" (859). This is where reading Conrad from the 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective might open a window into the matriarchal world and allows us to view a more balanced future. Conrad's own socioeconomic status, as expected, categorizes women as knitters, manipulators, socialites, dark angelic mistresses and innocent victims. But if we ponder Marlow as telling an *inconclusive tale* filled with women who create his opportunity, who have the power to *knit* his future, who become a fierce and feared jungle princess, then we can envision a latent feminine power that Conrad would scarcely dare to extol in addition to lambasting other elements of his own white society. Coupled with his fascination for nature and *her* power, coupled with Marlow as sitting in the pose of *A Buddha*, and coupled with claims that *mankind's* darkness is so devastating, we as modern readers are primed to at least ponder paradigms of the mother goddess and a balance of feminine and



masculine power. Admittedly it is a hard sell, that women in this text have any more than an ancillary, subservient, and inconsequential role. Yet if we accept that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* forged ahead of his time regarding colonization and capitalistic aims, we can at least propose that he hinted at other future pathways for humankind. This extensive tale of masculine hubris from the 1900s might easily become part of the catalyst of change during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Joseph Conrad was marked by the sea. He was enthralled by blank spaces on the map and the immensity of nature, yet he drank deeply from the waters of humanity and culture. He was appalled by white humanity. He came from the aristocracy, lived between the proletariat and the bourgeois classes. But always, he juxtaposed culture against elements of nature, both human and planetary nature. Conrad was searching for answers to all that he saw and experienced. Through Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* he makes his most compelling plea for society and the world to re-evaluate mankind's motivations. Even where the story begins and ends, upon a cruising yawl on The Thames, Conrad looks into the magical timeless mists settling on The Thames and becomes prescient. If Marlow were to continue his soliloquy on the history of the world a bit longer as they sat waiting for the ebb, he might well have said that the power of the tides, from the naturalist point of view, will always be stronger than the impulses of mankind. He surely would have proposed that time and nature will ultimately erase the darkness in mankind. Despite the passing of 215 years, we drink the same water as Conrad did, but the clear glass is clouding. Perhaps modern society can clarify or illuminate today's darkness by carrying Conrad's lamp.

## Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*.  
Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Second ed. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 693-702. Print.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness, An Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Sources Criticisms*.  
*3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Robert Kimbrough Ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1988. Print.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness and Secret Sharer*. New York: Signet, 1997. Print.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory, An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New  
York, Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009. Print.
- Elliot, Hugh. "Materialism." *Readings in Philosophy*. Buchler Justice, John Herman Randall,  
and Evelyn Urban Shirk eds. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964. (306-324). Print.
- Gore, Al. *The Future, Six Drivers of Global Change*. New York: Random House, 2013. Print.
- Hennessy, Maurice N. "The Congo Free State: A Brief History, 1876 to 1908." London: Pall  
Mall Press, 1961 (13-27) Print.
- Karl, Frederick R. and Marvin Magalaner Eds. *Great 20<sup>th</sup> Century English Novels*. New York:  
Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1966. Print.
- Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*.  
Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Second ed. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 693-702. Print.
- Madison, James. "The Federalist, Paper Number 10" (1787 and 1788). New York: The  
McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. 2014. Web.
- Marx, Karl. "Capital and "Wage Labor and Capital " *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 2 ed.  
Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, MA:Blackwell Publishing, 2004.  
659-664 and 665-671. Print.

Mason, Stephen F. *A History of the Sciences*. New York: Macmillan, 1962. Print.

Merriam Webster editorial staff. *Longman Webster English College Dictionary*. New York:  
Longman, 1984. Print.

Mudrick, Marvin Ed. *Conrad, A Collection of Critical Essays*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.  
1966. Print.

Stewart, J. I. M. *Joseph Conrad*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1968. Print.