〔東京家政大学研究紀要　第33集　(1), p.165～174, 1993〕

Heart of Darkness: the Russian as an Example of Conrad's Art

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(Received October 1, 1992)

Introduction: This paper is a study of the young unnamed Russian, a character in Joseph Conrad's short novel *Heart of Darkness.*[1] I intend to show how the Russian provides an especially instructive example of Conrad's artistic approach — the approach that can be seen in all his best novels and stories.

First, the Russian exemplifies Conrad's use of indirect presentation. Conrad seldom acts as omniscient author. He tends to tell his stories through at least one and often several narrators, whose viewpoints might be quite different. The Russian tells the main narrator, Marlow, most of the important facts about Kurtz's life before Kurtz fell ill. This is especially effective because of the irony of an innocent admirer telling a story about depravity that he himself fails to understand.

Second, the Russian is a literally colorful character. Even his clothes are colorful. In his visual presence, the Russian demonstrates how Conrad develops his moral themes through physical images — something Conrad is justly famous for doing in all of his greatest works.

Finally, the contrast between the Russian's innate purity and decency and his completely misguided view of his idol, Kurtz, demonstrates the complexity of Conrad's art.

For the benefit of those who need help in following the argument of this paper, a brief summary of the story will be included.

Story: The novella begins aboard a cruising yawl in the Thames. Five former seamen are enjoying an outing on the yawl, which is owned and skippered by a senior member of the group, the nameless "Director of Companies." As he describes the sun setting, the anonymous narrator,[2] who is one of the company, recalls the imperial history of Thames.

This leads, with the fall of darkness, to an abrupt signal by Marlow, another member of the group, that he intends to tell a story pertaining to the Thames and to imperialism. He asks the others to ponder the fact that for the ancient Romans visiting this distant outpost of *their* empire, Britain also "has been one of the dark places of the earth." Then Marlow launches into a story about an episode in his own life, as his friends know he will. Being fluent in French (not unlike Conrad himself), Marlow once solved the sailor-specific problem of unemployment by securing an appointment with a Belgian company as captain of a riverboat in the Belgian Congo. His job was to take the boat up the Congo River to the company's most distant outpost, there to make contact with the company's most promising trader, a man named Kurtz.

Since Conrad tends to relate the scenes in this novella by their musical and thematic connection rather than by cause and effect, there is really no plot to speak of. However the story[3] can be divided into five parts:

First, Marlow travels to the Central Station in the Congo to get his boat and meet the company men who will be coming with him. On this trip, first to the West African coast by ship, and then on foot, via caravan trail, to the company's Central Station, Marlow witnesses enough to convince him that the pious description of company intentions disseminated to the public in Brussels is a facade to cover the brutal exploitation both of the Afri-

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can natives and their primary natural resource, which in the Congo is elephant tusks. Along the way, Marlow witnesses chained African slaves, and a whole grove of dying Africans who had been worked until they simply dropped.

A mildly amusing discovery along the way to the main station is the accountant of the company's first post. This man is totally unresponsive to the human suffering around him, but keeps up his personal appearance to a point that impresses Marlow. His accounts turn out to be equally neat and perfect. It is this man who first explains who Kurtz is. To his completely pragmatic mind, Kurtz is a great trader because he sends the company more ivory than all the other traders combined.

The next stage is Marlow's arrival and forced three-month stay at the Central Station. The manager of the station is a very bland scoundrel, whom Marlow grows to thoroughly dislike. He is surrounded by non-working disciples, whom Marlow calls "pilgrims" because of their constant resort to long walking staves[4] — combined with their obvious worship of ivory, the goal, as it were, of their pilgrimage.

The manager and his pilgrims clearly envy Kurtz, and it gradually develops that they are plotting against him. Marlow would like to leave as soon as possible, but his riverboat was wrecked before he arrived. He later suspects that the manager was responsible for this, as he surely was for the delay in acquiring the rivets needed to repair the boat. This is part of a plot to isolate Kurtz, who is known to be ill. At any rate, the manager's estimate that Marlow will be delayed for three months proves accurate almost to the day.

In the third stage, Marlow finally sets out for Kurtz's station. He feels a sense of urgency about this because it is common knowledge that Kurtz is ill and needs Western medicine and care. Except for an attack by natives from Kurtz's area — urged on by an order from Kurtz himself, we later discover — nothing much happens. But Marlow develops a keen sense for what might happen. For instance, he realizes that the African cannibals aboard the boat far outnumber the Europeans and could rise up and eat them — but refrain from doing so. Marlow concludes that the Africans have a stronnger sense of human restraint than the Europeans, who resemble lazy pirates.[5]

When Marlow arrives at Kurtz's outpost, he is greeted by the young Russian. Since Kurtz is very ill by this time, Marlow learns of his exploits and deeds mostly from the Russian. There is an irony in this, which will be discussed at length in the paper, for the Russian is a very innocent young man, and Kurtz has succumbed to every available depravity. Marlow provides enough of a contrast to the manager and his pilgrims to distinguish himself in Kurtz's eyes, and Kurtz actually takes Marlow into his confidence, to some extent. Marlow's main impression of the dying Kurtz is of a skeletal body, a completely self-centered personality (his fiancee is never called anything but "my Intended"), and a still-powerful voice.

Really part of the same episode is the trip back to the Central Station, during which, one night, Kurtz dies. Kurtz has already entrusted Marlow with some papers and such information as the name (which we never learn) and whereabouts of the Intended.

The final segment is Marlow's gradual physical and psychological recovery from his Congo experience (he also fell ill) and his visit with Kurtz's Intended in Brussels.[6] This young woman proves as innocent as the Russian, if considerably more dignified. She still loves Kurtz, and Marlow does what he can to shield her from the truth of what Kurtz has done. Though he hates lying in all forms, Marlow lies to her. Kurtz's (literarily famous) dying words were actually, "The horror! The horror!"[7] But pressed by the Intended, Marlow says that Kurtz's last word was her name.

Study: Firstly, the Russian serves as an indirect means of presentation. Conrad was a pioneer in the development of techniques for presenting his action from different angles. His methods are taken for granted now, but in his own time Conrad was sometimes said to be magnificently unreadable by those who hadn't, in all probability, read very much of him. This must have accounted in large part for the lack of commercial success of his works. Henry James suffered from the same reputation, though James's manner of subtle presentation was quite different from Conrad's.

What Conrad seems to require in most of his stories is at least one narrator. Marlow is the main narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, and also of the earlier story "Youth," as well as of the subsequent novel *Lord Jim*, written dur-

ing the same period, and the much later novel *Chance*. But Conrad's use of the one narrator almost perforce involves the appearance of additional narrators to tell the main narrator what he couldn't have witnessed first-hand. This produces the famous Chinese-box technique of nested narrators that we sometimes encounter in Conrad's longer works. Ironically, his one real popular success, *Chance*, is the most notorious example of this technique. Even Henry James, who ought to be have been sympathetic, and whose opinion Conrad genuinely valued, wrote a hilarious review (though considerably harder to follow than the novel he was discussing) describing *Chance* as a sort of leaky rowboat in which the task of narration (to bail the boat out) is passed like a pale from narrator to narrator an impressive number of times.

In any case, the use of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* does require additional narrators. In fact, if we include the frameplot narrator at the beginning, who describes Marlow as relating his Congo experiences to the other friends aboard the yawl on the Thames, Marlow is already the second narrator. Marlow interrupts his story now and then, presumably (on Conrad's part) to remind us of this nuance. And the story ends with the original narrator speaking again.

So the Russian is ensconced in the kind of narrative structure that Conrad favors. But the choice of the Russian as a third-level narrator is far from arbitrary. Conrad is faced with a specific problem of presentation: As Marlow draws nearer to Kurtz, he becomes more and more obsessed with him. Kurtz has clearly gone wrong, to put it mildly, but unlike the other company traders and aspiring traders Marlow has met, he seems to have genius. It is this image of genius turned evil that gives Kurtz tragic possibilities, both for Marlow and for the reader. The problem is that the story requires Kurtz to be near death by the time Marlow reaches him. How can a character who is already reduced to skull and bones — Marlow's actual image — convey these potentials?

The answer is, through the eyes of an admiring innocent, who tells much more than he understands himself — and this innocent is, of course, the Russian. Just how innocent the Russian is becomes clear to Marlow when the young man admits to him — admits, rather than complains — that Kurtz stole from him:

> "'You can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no! Now — just to give you an idea — I don't mind telling you, he wanted to shoot me, too, one day — but I don't judge him.' 'Shoot you!' I [Marlow] cried. 'What for?' 'Well, I had a small lot of ivory the chief of that village near my house gave me. You see I used to shoot game for them. Well, he wanted it, and wouldn't hear reason. He declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory and then cleared out of the country, because he could do so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true, too. I gave him the ivory. What did I care? But I didn't clear out. No, no. I couldn't leave him. I had to be careful, of course, till we got friendly again for a time..." (pp. 218-19).

One notes the matter-of-fact tone that this outrageous act is related in. There is no bruised avarice ("I gave him the ivory. What did I care?"), and no rankling sense of the unfairness of Kurtz's demand. By Kurtz's not hearing "reason," the Russian is downplaying the fact that, all questions of ethics aside, Kurtz was already extorting more ivory on his raids of neighhboring tribes than all the other agents combined could amass (as the accountant explained earlier). He had no need for the Russian's pittance. So this particular robbery was not only unjust and ungrateful to his constant helper, but perverse. All of which the Russian passes off in a folksy little narrative, the conclusion of which, minus all melodrama, is that he bided his time in order to ingratiate himself with Kurtz all over again.

Conrad's use of the Russian to present this side of Kurtz is inspired. The Russian strikes the exact key necessary to convey the moral madness of Kurtz's actions. There is no resort to inflation. It is the Russian's lack of proper resentment that makes us especially critical of Kurtz on his behalf.

With the same stroke, the reader gets a glimpse of the idolatry that Kurtz exacted from local natives. This becomes clear when the Russian tries to describe the power Kurtz exerted by describing the way local natives crawl when approaching his domicile. Marlow's sardonic comment on this enthusiasm is, "He [the Russian] forgot I

hadn't heard any of these splendid monologues on, what was it? on love, justice, conduct of life — or what not. If it had come to crawling before Mr. Kurtz, he crawled as much as the veriest savage of them all" (p. 222). The complete naturalness of this remark may divert us from the Russian's rhetorical function here: he is really being used to enact what in the story it is too late to present directly: the natives' deification of Kurtz. Not only does the Russian describe this idolatry, he exemplifies it in a disarmingly innocent form. Though he is more than this, the Russian serves as a kind of surrogate native.

A second quality of Conrad's art is his use of physical details — especially visual notations — often, though not always, to suggest larger issues. Conrad ends his introduction to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* with the famous sentence, "My purpose, then, is to make you hear, to make you feel; it is above all to make you *see* — that, and no more, and it is everything." This pretty sentence is more than an exercise in fine writing. It explains perhaps Conrad's greatest single strength as a novelist: his power of physical evocation.

More often than not, as Conrad plainly says, the greatest appeal is to the sense of sight. The moral imbecility of the demented second mate in *Typhoon*, for instance, is fully suggested by the snapshot of him in his cabin. Even though he spends all his spare time there, "the man who came in to wake him for his watch on deck would invariably find him with his eyes wide open, flat on his back in the bunk, and glaring irritably from a soiled pillow."[8] This image sums up the second mate's character and is just as likely to be remembered as the details of how he actually disgraces himself when the storm comes.

A less morally freighted visual nuance, perhaps, but just as vivid, marks the fatal spearing of Marlow's African helmsman in *Heart of Darkness:* "He looked at me anxiously, gripping the spear like something precious, with an air of being afraid I would try to take it away from him." Any one of Conrad's successful works is full of arresting images like this. Despite their apparent lack of mystery, they are trademarks, and have had an obvious influence on later novelists like Graham Greene.

The young Russian is an especially good example of Conrad's use of visual imagery because his appearance, both at a distance, and then up close, is so central to his character. The first thing Marlow notices about him is his combination of apparent raggedness and actual neatness, enhanced by an overwhelming sense of color. This affect — which is quite unconscious on the Russian's part — is achieved by the crazy quilt of patches with which his clothes are mended from head to toe:

> "His aspect reminded me of something I had seen — something funny I had seen somewhere. As I maneuvered to get alongside, I was asking myself, 'What does this fellow look like?' Suddenly I got it. He looked like a harlequin. His clothes had been made of some stuff that was brown holland probably, but it was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue red, yellow, — patches on the back, patches on the front, patches on elbows, on knees; coloured bind around his jacket, scarlet edging at the bottom of his trousers; and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all his patches had been done" (p. 212).

This description, in its exuberance, owes something to Dickens, but it represents Conrad's characteristic way of visually establishing a contrast — here between the charming young Russian and the Belgian company men whom Marlow has grown to loathe. Leaving the others (and perhaps the stench of dead hippo meat) and meeting the young man is literally to get a breath of fresh air. The Russian is the perfect foil to the worst of the Belgians, the manager of the Central Station and his uncle, leading "buccaneer" of the sordid Eldorado Exploring Expedition, the goal of which is 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 breaking into a safe" [p. 177].

Conrad subtly underscores this contrast by allowing the manager at the Central Station to announce the existence of the Russian. Quite innocently, while resting aboard his boat, Marlow overhears the manager and his uncle plotting the downfall of Kurtz. The manager complains about the competition posed by some friend of Kurtz's, "a pestilential fellow." The fellow referred to is actually the Russian, who turns out to be anything but "pestilential." The manager blurts out, "We will not be free from

unfair competition till one of these fellows is hanged for an example." "Certainly," grunts the uncle, "get him hanged! Why not? Anything — anything can be done in this country...." Here, appropriately in a secret conversation between the novella's most obvious scoundrels, the theme of depravity as the convergence of bad character and no restraints is laid bare.

Marlow's luck in overhearing this conversation enables him later to warn the Russian at Kurtz's post before the young man falls afoul of the manager's cohorts, the "pilgrims." Thus, the young man is able to slip off one night in a canoe (after borrowing some of Marlow's tobacco), and the minor conflict between these two sides is played out.

But this conflict is most strikingly enacted in terms of physical contrasts. While the Russian is radiant and lean, the manager is described as flabby and totally unremarkable in appearance. When Marlow first refers to him, he notes that he was "commonplace in complexion, in feature, in manners, and in voice...middle size and of ordinary build," with eyes of "the usual blue," though "remarkably cold" (p. 163). This description uncannily evokes the surrealist Rene Magritte's paintings of invincibly solemn Belgian merchants, like the man in the bowler hat whose blandness is not threatened by a pigeon that is somehow placed squarely in front of his face. Marlow has already suggested how muuch more menacing this commonplace appearance is than the overt ferocity of some of the Africans. Earlier in the story, thinking forward to the manager, amid the violent treatment of some slaves by their African drivers, he comments:

> "I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! these were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men — men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, 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" (p. 155).

This is a very direct condemnation of the manager, softened in the reading only by the nuance that he has yet to make his appearance in the story. But his flabbiness, and its ultimate contrast to the harlequin-like Russian — is the statement's key device.

Though hardly more insidious than the manager, the uncle is blunter in speech and grosser in appearance. He doesn't even look bourgeois, and he is obese in a pompous, self-approving way:

> "In exterior he resembled a butcher in a poor neighbourhood, and his eyes had a look of sleepy cunning. He carried his fat paunch with ostentation on his short legs, and during the time his gang infested the station spoke to no one but his nephew" (pp. 177-78).

The ultimate suggestion of these sharp physical contrasts is moral: the Russian's lean cleanliness and clean, bright patches all convey a love for life and an innocent trust in it. The appearances of the manager and his uncle suggest the kind of stagnation and brooding that lead to the treachery everywhere apparent in the Belgian Congo. Just as they plot against the harmless Russian, they hope that his master Kurtz, their chief rival for ivory, will die of his rumored illness. Later, Marlow suspects that the manager has scuttled the riverboat himself and deliberately intercepted Marlow's requests for more rivets to repair the boat in order to isolate Kurtz for an additional three months. In fact, by the time Marlow's boat arrives, Kurtz is beyond recovery.

On closer inspection, the Russian has a physical tick that Conrad also puts to thematic use. Besides his little blue eyes Marlow notices that his boyish face gives off "smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open countenance like sunshine and shadow on a wind-swept plain" (p. 212). Conrad uses these alternating smiles and frowns to suggest the moral and psychological ambiguity of the Russian's sojourn as Kurtz's only European ally. All of the Russian's public manifestations suggest that he admires Kurtz deeply and would do anything for him. But to appreciate the Russian's character is to realize that he would be incapable of the atrocities and perversions that have clearly overwhelmed Kurtz's conscience. As Marlow sums the Russian up:

> "His need was to exist, and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of privation. If the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unprac-

> tical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth. I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame. It seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely, that even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he — the man before your eyes — who had gone through these things" (pp. 216-17).

However, Marlow cuts his praise short in the very next sentence: "I did not envy his devotion to Kurtz, though" (p. 217). Leaving aside Kurtz's indulgence in savage rites — which clearly include cannibalism — the Russian could never bring himself to invade and pillage. In this respect, Kurtz's only moral advantage over the manager and the pilgrims is his intellectual honesty about what he is doing — though he is only honest with himself.

Quite simply, the Russian could never do any of the things that make Kurtz a special case. Yet he venerates Kurtz as sincerely as any of the natives and defends him with dogged fidelity against any imputation of wrong. This violation of his own innate standards has to involve a lot of repression (though Freud's ideas were still unknown at the time *Heart of Darkness* was written). And repression typically results in ticks and sudden mood swings. Conrad extends this smile-frown contest beyond the merely striking image to a more generalized rhythm of ambivalence in the Russian's attempts to defend Kurtz's pillaging: "It was curious to see his mingled eagerness and reluctance to speak of Kurtz," Marlow comments. "The man filled his life, occupied his thoughts, swayed his emotions" (p. 218). Of course, the note of smiles and frowns chasing each other is taken up by this mingling — which is to say, simultaneous occurrence at the edges — of eagerness to speak of Kurtz, whom he consciously worships, and reluctance to do so because he has a repressed awareness of the evil that Kurtz has done.

This is generalized further by the suggestion that Kurtz "swayed his emotions." The almost vertiginous swaying of emotions can be seen in all of the Russian's apparitions. Every time he admits a wrong that Kurtz has done, for instance, he interrupts himself with a protest of his inability to understand the mystery of such an exalted figure. When he finally admits that it was Kurtz who ordered the natives' attack on Marlow's riverboat (that took the life of the helmsman), he explains, "He [Kurtz] hated sometimes the idea of being taken away — and then again....But I don't understands these matters. I am a simple man" (p. 229: the dots are Conrad's).

A grimly humorous example of the same swaying rhythm in the Russian's attitudes turns out to be dangerous for Marlow. First the Russian assures Marlow that the natives are quite safe, and he can visit Kurtz with no fear of danger. So Marlow eagerly accepts the invitation, only to be confronted by a group of natives of menacing aspect. But the Russian, instead of renewing his assurances, comments: "Now, if he [meaning Kurtz] does not say the right thing to them we are all done for" (p. 223). So he isn't sure about the natives after all, and he has lost his recent confidence in Kurtz. This could be fatal for both himself and the trusting Marlow.

By now, besides the psychological explanation of these smiles and frowns, it seems clear that the shabby treatment he has received from Kurtz, who is almost a solipsist, has reduced the Russian to a state not only of swaying emotions but swaying mental processes. In this light, his constantly changing face is rather touching. It is the face of the servant who has to adjust his expressions to the whims of his master.

The third Conradian trait that the Russian exemplifies, and the final one to be discussed in this paper, is a complexity of attitude. This takes many forms, but it is always characterized by a depth of awareness of implications, however, inconvenient for the main point. In the best of Conrad's works, there is no glazing over of seeming contradictions.

This often takes the form of irony. By now it should be clear that Conrad is entirely behind Marlow[9] — though, again, in the spirit of complexity, Marlow is no omniscient author in disguise — in his basic jdgements. The Russian is indeed an admirable character, and the Belgian company men, from the manager down through the pilgrims, are a pack of scoundrels and plunderers. How deeply Conrad felt about this is suggested in the fact that *Heart of Darkness* was partly responsible for the growing condemnation of the Belgian King Leopold's exploitation of the Congo.

Yet, with regard to their attitudes about Kurtz, the selfish scoundrels are closer to the truth than the pure, un-

selfish Russian. Consider, for instance, the attitude towards Kurtz expressed by the bricklayer of the Central Station, a man whose job is technically to lay bricks, but who is clearly no laborer and seems never to have seen a brick. Marlow has great contempt for him: "I let him run on, this papier-machie Mephistopheles, and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe" (p. 171). And indeed he is a pitiless tyrant with the Africans under his thumb ("pitiless" being his own proud self-description [p. 169]). He conspires against Kurtz with the manager for no other reason than his hope of becoming the next assistant manager: he fears (absurdly) that Kurtz might get the job. Nor does Marlow approve of the tone with which he lampoons Kurtz's pious speeches when Kurtz once stopped at the Central Station:

> "'He is a prodigy,' he said at last. 'He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress and devil knows what else. What want,' he began to declaim suddenly, 'for the guidance of the cause intrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose.' 'Who says that?' I asked. 'Lots of them,' he replied" (p.169).

Nevertheless, say what we will, this is a rather successful parody of Kurtz's eloquent lip service to benevolence and other good things in the Congo. The truth — reflecting the historical truth of exploitation that so angered Conrad from the time of his own Marlow-like tour of duty in the Congo — is scribbled at the end of a high-minded report that Kurtz wrote for The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. The report features pure, benign eloquence, unfettered by practical suggestions about how exactly to raise the Africans to a higher plane. Marlow confesses to being moved by the eloquence of the report himself: "It gave the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence." Yet, scrawled at the bottom of the last page, evidently much later is a hand-written gloss: "Exterminate the brutes!" (Ibid).

The point is that the bricklayer and his manager, who complains of the same thing to his uncle, are far closer to the truth of the matter than the Russian, whose own reaction to Kurtz's eloquence is, "He made me see things — things" (p. 217).

But Conrad goes beyond this simple irony of the just being fooled by pretensions that the unjust see right through. He poses the further question, what is it that the manager and his allies actually object to? Surely not to the exploitation of the Africans, whom they murder all the time — even, it is unmistakably suggested, for sport: As the riverboat starts to return to the Central Station, with the dying Kurtz aboard, the pilgrims start firing into the African crowd, apparently to beguile the time: "And then the imbecile crowd down on the deck started their little fun, and I could see nothing more for smoke" (p. 237).

The answer is that all the manager, et. al. object to is the "unsound method" (p. 227) employed by Kurtz; which is perhaps to say that *as propaganda* his violent exploitation was too obvious. This is the point at which Marlow expresses (to his listeners on the yawl) a sense of foul air in the manager's presence that made even Kurtz the desirable choice of nightmares" (p. 228).

Thus, Conrad uses the Russian to express one of his main themes, and one that solves a complex dilemma: the manager is correct about Kurtz for the wrong reason — a purely mercantile reason, devoid of ethical or humane considerations. And the Russian is wrong about Kurtz, but for a decent reason: He is looking for a spiritual guide.

It is no coincidence that the Russian actually follows some diabolical advice given the manager by his rapacious uncle. What the uncle is advising the manager to do is trust to the jungle to destroy Kurtz's health and perhaps his mind as well,[10] but the scene acquires significance from its relation to the rest of the story:

> "'Ah! my boy, trust to this — I say trust to this.' I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for a gesture that took in the forest, the creek, the mud, the river, — seemed to beckon with a dishonouring flourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart" (p. 182).

Again, ironically, the uncle — the evil side — is quite correct. The jungle proves trustworthy in disposing of Kurtz. But the person who trusts the jungle implicitly is, of

course, the Russian. This is a spiritual distinction between a genuine love of life and a parasite's exploitation of it. Fittingly, the distinction is reinforced physically by the contrast in bodies. One imagines the Russian's slim, graceful arm next to the "flipper" of the paunchy uncle. A further paradox is that the Russian's trust seems to be rewarded, despite his naivete.[11] Marlow's last sight of him, as he slips away to avoid being murdered by the manager's people, is rather upbeat: "One of his pockets (bright red) was bulging with cartridges, from the other (dark blue) peeped 'Towson's Inquiry'....He seemed to think himself excellently well equipped for a renewed encounter with the wilderness" (p. 230). And in a final irony, the last words of this happy and blessed truster of nature are in praise of his false idol, Kurtz:

"'Ah! I'll never, never meet such a man again. You ought to have heard him recite poetry — his own, too, it was, he told me. Poetry!' He rolled his eyes at the recollection off these delights 'Oh, he enlarged my mind!" (Ibid).

Conclusion: In conclusion, then, the young Russian provides a vivid instance of Conrad's artistic approach: he is a perfect example of Conrad's technique of nested narrators because he has a completely innocent eye; he is a fine example of Conrad's genius for providing images to embody his themes; and he strikingly demonstrates Conrad's use of complex irony.

Notes:

1 All references to this work will be in the text. The edition referenced is: Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness and Other Stories* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press), 1990.

2 Brown, Douglas, "From *Heart of Darkness to Nostromo:* An Approach to Conrad," in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature,* Boris Ford (ed.) (London, New York: Viking Penguin Inc. m 1983), p. 136: Brown states flatly that this is Conrad: "The novelist himself is among the group of listeners to Marlow's voice, aboard the yawl that night in the Thames." This view is a harmless embellishment, but in the interest of accuracy, one must wonder how, if challenged, Brown could defend it as anything more than a private conviction. Some writers, like Maugham, appear in their own stories, but they do so by name, which is the only way we can say so with authority.

3 This distinction between story and plot is useful. It may have originated with E. M. Forster in his small critical classic (originally a lecture at Kings College, Cambridge), *Aspects of the Novel.* Basically, if a series of events in a work of fiction form a causal chain, that is a plot, and if they simply proceed from one event to the next, with no inevitability, that is a story.

4 Aldeman, Gary. *Heart of Darkness: Search for the Unconscious* (Boston: Twayne Publishers: 1987), p. 85. Aldeman points out that the pilgrims' staves prefigure the staves that hold the shrunken heads in front of Kurtz's bungalow.[4]

5 Hubbard, Francis A. *Theories of Action in Conrad* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978, 1984), p. 56. Hubbard points this out rather brilliantly in support of the thesis that restraint is the key human virtue extolled in the novella.

6 See Leavis, F. R. *The Great Tradition,* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948, 1972), p. 209; Daleski, H. M., *Joseph Conrad: The Way of Dispossession* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 74-75. This scene is the center of a controversy. Leavis thinks it excessive. Daleski thinks the lie doesn't bear the significance given to it because it is simply common decency. On the other hand, Adelman, P. 80, considers it an integral to the theme of the novel: "The actual lie he tells her...is, on the symbolic level, a tribute — or concession — to the triumphant darkness, and the whole of the story appears a dark meditation on civilization as humanity's dubious victory over itself."

7 As every critic points out, T. S. Eliot uses quotations from *Heart of Darkness* as epigraphs to his poem "The Hollow Men." This is one of them. It is worth adding that Eliot might have been as inspired by the company men as by Kurtz, who is less unequivocally hollow.

8 Conrad, Joseph. *Typhoon in The Portable Conrad,* Morton D. Zabel (ed.) (Hammondworth, Middlesex, England and New York: Penguin Books 1947), 1975, p. 216.

9 But see, for instance, Bonney, William W., *Thorns and Arabesques: Contexts for Conrad's Fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 154. Conrad supports Marlow in his

basic valuation of the Russian, at least, but Bonney and other critics stress the difference between Conrad and his character. Bonney, for instance, writes, "However much Conrad may sympathize (or even agree) with Marlow's philosophical meditations, it is indisputable that Marlow is repeatedly presented as a character whose personality is warped and whose vision is colored by subjective biases just like other of Conrad's characters, and as such Marlow's voice cannot be accepted unquestioningly by the reader." Of course, we should not accept Marlow's assessments without question, but we can more often than not accept them *after* we have looked into the specific matter, and in the case of the young Russian, it seems clear we can.

10 Hubbard, p. 78, suggests that Marlow is especially appalled by this advice because it presumes that the uncle understands the "profound darkness" of the jungle.

11 See Stewart, J. I. M, *Joseph Conrad,* (London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1968), p. 78. Stewart calls the Russian "innocent to the extent of being a kind of fool of God."

Acknowledgement:

My thanks to Professor Tetsuo Arai for rendering my synopsis in Japanese.

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『闇の奥』：コンラッドの技法の一例としてのロシア人について

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（平成4年10月1日受理）

本稿は，ジョーゼフ・コンラッド（Joseph Conrad）の作品『闇の奥』（*Heart of Darkness*）に登場する若いロシア人に関し若干の考察を試みたものであり，本稿の主たる目的は，この若いロシア人がコンラッドの技法，つまりコンラッドの優れた長編および短篇小説中に見られる技法を説明する特に良い例となっていることを示そうとするものである．

まず第一に，このロシア人は，コンラッドの用いる間接提示の技法を具現する人物となっている．コンラッドは，一般的に，自ら作品中で語ることはせず，少なくとも一人，或いは見解の全く異なることもある数人の語り手を登場させ，彼らを通して語る．このロシア人は，主たる語り手であるマーロウ（Marlow）に対し，クルツ（Kurts）が病気で倒れる以前のクルツの生活について重要な事実を語る．この語りは，クルツを無邪気に崇拝するこのロシア人が，自分自身でも理解していない悪行について自ら語るというアイロニーを含むゆえに，特に効果的である．

二番目に，このロシア人は文字どおり彩り豊かな性格を持った人物である．彼の着ている服までが，彩り豊かである．目に見えるものとして彼を存在させることにより，コンラッドは身体的イメージを通して道徳的主題を展開させようとしている．視覚を通して主題を発展させる技法は，コンラッドが数多くの彼の偉大な作品中で試みていることであるが，この作品でもまた，このロシア人を用い，彼独特の技法を披露している．

最後に，このロシア人生来の純粋さや品位と，彼の崇拝する偶像であるクルツにより完全に誤り導かれることとなった彼の今の考え方を対比してみると，複雑なコンラッドの技法の冴えが浮かび上がってくる．

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