

Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness through a Dialogic Lens

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Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis is to apply M. Bakhtin's ideas on the dialogic nature of novelistic discourse to a chosen text, a novella Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad.

The original idea of writing this thesis was inspired by the discipline of postcolonial criticism, within which Heart of Darkness (hereafter HOD) has become a classic reading. The story, which is set in the colonial context and includes a number of infamous, racially prejudiced portrayals of the native inhabitants, had provoked a massive debate in the mid 1970-ies after a renown African novelist, Chinua Achebe, gave a postcolonial turn to the novel by calling its author a "thoroughgoing racist".¹ Achebe's incriminations had been met with mixed and by far negative feelings among the "first world" academics who had long championed Conrad as one of the greatest English modernist novelists of the 20th century. The sheer immensity of this debate seems to originate from the fact that Conrad, on the one hand, is a widely acknowledged writer and, on the other hand, a person who is thought to be critical of imperialism (and thereby of racism, from which the latter is thought to originate) and especially so in HOD. Ever since Achebe's attack, many a prominent literary critic with taste for Conrad (and there are many of them in the western part of the world!) have been trying to fend off the favourite writer's reputation with all possible means. When defending the racism-charged paragraphs, some critics would even go so far as, for example, to say that Conrad in HOD had created almost a revolution in the English language or a daring innovation by not succumbing to the 'automatic' power of linguistic signs, which allowed him to transcend the power of language to parallelism and thus become aware of racism ingrained in the language itself.

Having imposed himself on the language in describing the earth, Marlow proceeds to an even more daring innovation. The passage reads, "The earth seemed unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. [...]" Clearly, Marlow had been about to follow an "automatic" tendency of language to parallelism and say that the earth was unearthly and the men were inhuman, but then, in a moment of spontaneous self-revision marked by a dash, he decided that the men were *not* inhuman, that the statement offered him by language was not, after all, precise (Kaplan et al 2005: 28; original italics)

¹ Originally Achebe was not so euphemistic and used the epithet "bloody" instead of the later version.

The title of the article is "Beyond Mastery", whose author purports to explore Conrad's appropriation of the English language during his writing career. Curiously enough, the article never makes it further than the exploration of HOD and most of the examples are not only taken from this story but also address the racially prejudiced paragraphs without (as in the quote above) the word racism really being spelled out. Without questioning the scientific worth of such criticism (that may surely hold water at some abstract, linguistic level), it is on the whole quite interesting to see how the criticism of the literary work has been skewed in order to justify Conrad's reputation as a good writer, a man and who knows what else. I have quoted this passage in order to emphasise that since 1975, when Achebe first addressed the American academics at a conference, the criticism of the novella has been increasingly ideologised. So much indeed that in the end it seems that if one wants to do an analysis of HOD, one is offered two possibilities - either pro or contra Achebe's critique or maybe some muddled, reconciliatory middle version. While doing the pro analysis will inevitably lead to the issues of racism and many of Conrad's passages obviously do not stand the test. The contra analysis requires also a conceptualisation of racism, but this time we should treat the work in the context of its own time in which racism was normal, that is, part of the language and culture. So, whether Conrad was a racist or he was not really, seems to depend solely on the part you take in the argument. It seems that many critics have argued against Achebe (also African critics!) because Conrad was sceptical of imperialism and therefore Africans should be made to see and respect his novel as pro-African or some such thing (see for example Adekoya's article "Criticising the critic" in Podis & Saaka 1998:165-78).

To be sure, the debate is very long and more complex than I make it to be, but it appears to have very little to do with HOD as a literary and fictitious work of art rather than HOD as a racist or anti-racist and anti-imperialist manifesto. Of course, the extreme ideologisation of even a fictitious text is a legitimate thing to do and more than anything else reflects the spirit of our time, in which the struggle against oppression takes place on the more symbolic/semiotic (as opposed to physical) levels of representation and latent racial and cultural prejudices. But no matter how important this perspective is here and now, it is in the end just one out of many others and therefore can never pretend to fully dominate the meaning of the text and especially a work of fiction.

In the amended version of his address, Achebe recognised certain literary worth of HOD but upheld his charge against its racism. After all, Achebe's own criticism of Conrad belongs to the more extreme decade of postcolonial struggle when lines of battle for the full recognition of African and other, formerly colonised cultures, were still sharply drawn up. To give an extreme ideological turn

to a classic text within the corpus English colonial literature (whose major works of the imperial past, as it were, teem with superior and racist representations of the colonised other), is after all not a literary but an inherently political and broadly cultural piece of criticism. Achebe's 'bloody racist' freezes Conrad's work and in one stroke silences the pathos-charged jabber of literary critics about Conrad's frame-narration, flashbacks and other kinds of literary devices, exactly in the same way as Marlow's steam-whistle in HOD silences the jabber and humanity of the natives who spin and leap ashore. The extremity and reification of Achebe's attack is thus in direct ratio to the extremity of Conrad's own prejudiced descriptions of the native Africans (no matter how advanced and liberal they were at Conrad's time!). In the end any attempt to defend Conrad on charges of racism is futile at least for two related reasons. Firstly, Achebe's attack is not on Conrad the writer and therefore does not doubt his literary gifts. Secondly, how can one argue with someone's perception of the text as racist when the very colour of black skin acts as an acidic test for this kind of representations!?

I personally do not want to argue with Achebe whether HOD is racist or not, as I would not argue with, say, a victim of Holocaust about whether his or her experiences were horrible enough or not. HOD and Conrad definitely read as racist to any racially-aware reader of modern times, but their racism is just one aspect of the text and therefore, at least within the realm of literary analysis, should be treated as just one constituent of the narrative and its ideological and stylistic unity, and not as an overshadowing and therefore necessarily reductive and reifying element that turns the complex perceptual universe of a novel into one-sided rhetoric of either pro or contra. My stance towards HOD is therefore similar to that of Wilson Harris who sympathised with Achebe's unease about the continuing growth of racial prejudices, but who also chose to look at the text and assess "the pressures of form that engaged Conrad's imagination (...)" (Harris 1981: 86). I am quite sure that Achebe would love to provide a more balanced reading of the novel if not for the deeply offensive material in it. But this does not imply that the rest of the criticism should act apologetically on Conrad's behalf. Rather the racist strand, in my view, should be seen as an organic part of the novel that helps to explain the text and its epoch from multiple perspectives and not just from a few chosen ones.

I began writing this thesis thinking that I could combine Bakhtin's ideas with postcolonial criticism, but in the end I opted solely for the former. Postcolonial criticism is by now a very broad area that draws on a wide array of texts and disciplines (Bakhtin included). However, the classic texts within postcolonialism address the issue of representation and identity, which in turn constitute an

ideological and cultural approach to the text. The literariness of the text is first of all addressed from the perspective of the text's representation of the other (person, culture, etc.) and only secondarily in terms of text's own, literary devices. Of course, there are many different postcolonial readings that may favour more literary than representational dimension of the text and vice versa. But because postcolonial criticism as a discipline is so rapidly developing and now resembles a full-blown post-modern theory with an endless number of different approaches and perspectives, it is at the same time also difficult for a student to find a more or less firm foothold from which to start his or her own thinking. Thus, while the classic texts within 'Postcolonialism', such as, for instance, Edward Said's *Orientalism* or Frantz Fanon's 'The wretched of the Earth', represent very important perspectives on respectively the intercultural perception and the psychological damages of colonialism, they still remain one-dimensional in their approach to the text. Similarly, Said's method of contrapuntal reading, although remains aware of both the home context of the text and that of the represented other, it still focuses on the ideological and representational dimensions of the text (Said 1994: 59).

Opposed to this, Bakhtin's dialogical principle of criticism can also be said to be a contrapuntal type of reading, but this time the dialogue is between form and content inside the text and not, like in Said, a dialogue between different ideological and cultural discourses or between the one who does the representation and the one who is represented. In Bakhtin, every language and genre represented in the text carries with it its own way of seeing and portraying reality, its own ideology, which together constitute a heteroglot artistic whole within the text. The objective with such analysis is thus to identify the major voices or discourse types (i.e. uses of language) within the work in question, and how these, by dialogising with and against each other, create one artistic unity. According to Bakhtin himself, such approach allows breaching of the gap between the strictly formal and the strictly ideological approach to the text, because each aspect of the represented discourse is both stylistically as well as ideologically different from other aspects of discourse (Bakhtin: see the opening lines in "The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics").

Thus, in this thesis I have been primarily guided by Bakhtin's ideas on how to analyse a text, but even though I do not explicitly refer to postcolonial criticism, my focus on and awareness of the representational dimension of the text (I am sure unconsciously) is influenced by this discipline as well as by the debate on racism in HOD. However, I have tried to resist the temptation of making my analysis partake explicitly in the discussion of racism, but to look instead at how racist strand is one among many other narrative strands that together weave into a text understood as a formal and

ideological whole being formed against its dialogising background (i.e. historical context and readership).

In the following I will present my outline of Bakhtin's ideas and will argue for their relevance for my purposes.

Bakhtin and the Dialogic Approach

The objective with this chapter is to give an overview of Bakhtin's concepts as they relate to the literary analysis and therefore will be considered from this perspective only. In my exposition of Bakhtin I have tried to create a holistic picture of his concepts as belonging to a system of thought, dialogism, rather than as separate elements. Indeed, the appropriation of Bakhtin's different concepts has been extensive and in many ways fruitful in so broad and different areas as linguistics, feminist theory, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, etc., and, of course, literary criticism itself (within which many of Bakhtin's own concepts were originally developed). Such borrowing of concepts and their disassociation from the original context is a natural and fully legitimate process, the process that Bakhtin, with his emphasis on dialogue (and hence constant evolution rather than stasis of thought), would himself only happily embrace. However, this is my first serious encounter with Bakhtin and I thought that before experimenting, I should first try to understand how Bakhtin originally conceived and used his ideas. Because I have chosen to conduct a literary analysis, my focus on Bakhtin is accordingly literary at its core. But, those who have worked with Bakhtin before know how vast is the enterprise of his thinking activity, which includes in its range no less than the whole history of European civilisation beginning with Greek antiquity and lasting until the third quarter of the 20th century, the range that is not narrowly literary/cultural but philosophical as well. Accordingly, Bakhtin's concept of dialogue has its origin in philosophical speculations and had been inspired by, among others, Buber, Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky. But the concept of dialogue, in its broadest sense, underlies not only all Bakhtin's major literary concepts (e.g. polyphony, carnival, heteroglossia, chronotope, etc.), but also is a cornerstone of a dialogic concept of reason that implies the necessity of a dialogic contact between subjects as the precondition for obtaining knowledge of oneself through the other (i.e. we need the other in order to know ourselves) (Lundquist et al 2001: 34-5). In this light, the whole of our existence is conceived in terms of dialogue that takes place on innumerable levels beginning with the dialogue between the larger historical forces of ideological centralisation and decentralisation and ending on a level of an

utterance or even a word and its intonation (which all indicate the social life of the word and populate it with different accents and meanings). The level at which I will be looking at the dialogue of creation is the level of a text and its relation to its historical epoch. According to Bakhtin, it is important to place the given text in the dialogue of its historical context, to identify its major ideological voices and accents. This implies an analysis of social forces behind the languages and genres incorporated into the text. The major concept to be deployed here is heteroglossia, that is, the different social forces that stratify or direct the unitary language into their own ideological and formal orientation. In the following I will describe this concept and explain how it relates to literary analysis as well as to the other concepts, mentioned above. The only concept of Bakhtin I will not be dealing with in the course of my work is the chronotope. Although this concept has also been developed within the realm of literary analysis and originally was applied to studying literary works, the chronotope stands quite apart from Bakhtin's other literary concepts such as, for instance, heteroglossia and polyphony. The chronotope (literally time-space) aims at explaining how the image of man and reality has been perceived and represented in terms of time and space (the two, according to Einstein's relativity theory, hang together) in the course of historical development of literature.² Bakhtin claims that every literary genre and every epoch has perceived and represented time and space differently and that these can be seen in different historical works. For example, the epic past is an absolute and distant past as well as the image of an epic hero is equally distant, closed-off and irreproachable. To the epic genre Bakhtin opposes the novel that is grounded in actuality, in the zone of familiar present. The image of man in the novel is accordingly more open and subject to change and development. Different chronotopes thus reflect different historical times' relation to and representation of reality with the novelistic genre exhibiting a multiplicity of chronotopes due to its combination of many genres and languages (as opposed to the epic that generally (and in its classic version) has only one language, one point of view, one hero, etc.). Without a doubt, the chronotope is a very important and not the least most complex concept in Bakhtin's body of thought, but it addresses the nature of literature at a rather abstract, meta-level and therefore approaches literary analysis from a different perspective by exploring time/space dimension of the text. I have found it more interesting and relevant to pay attention to the more concrete aspects of the text, aspects that look at how the text is constructed of different languages, genres and inherent in them different ways of seeing and perceiving reality. Uncovering of

² See "Epic and Novel" and "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination – Four Essays* by M. Bakhtin 2001, University of Texas Press.

heteroglossia in the text implies thus both formal and ideological approach, for each language and genre are both formally as well as ideologically different from others.

Dialogism as a Heteroglot Social Phenomenon

It should be noted from the outset that for Bakhtin dialogism is not a structuring principle that pertains solely to literature, but rather designates the most overarching principle in Bakhtin's conception of language and society, which he sees as inherently heteroglot, that is, shot-through with diverse (hetero-) speeches (glossia). Literature is thus only a reflection and artistic incorporation of social heteroglossia.

Different languages or speeches of social heteroglossia are dialogically oriented towards each other, a process in which each language carries its own ideological meaning, its own ideological truth about the world. Languages of heteroglossia are therefore languages of different social groups that constitute a society and stratify its unitary language. Each language of heteroglossia responds to its own socio-ideological requirements (class, profession, gender, etc), but at the same time also actively participates in the speech diversity that surrounds it. Each word/utterance is thus imbued with different accents and intentions that stratify it from within (Bakhtin 1981:272). Thus, Bakhtin conceives the dialogic process of language as a constant and *simultaneous* play between centralising and decentralizing forces of language or what he also calls centrepetal (moving towards the centre) and centrifugal (away from the centre) forces.

The unitary, national language is therefore a necessary centrepetal force that renders the chaos of social heteroglossia intelligible by defining a stable ideological nucleus, a particular collective world view that secures “a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life” (Ibid. 271, italics in the original). The creation of a unitary language is connected with socio-political and cultural centralization in the history of humanity. In this connection we can regard the creation of nation states, their expansion and annexing of adjacent territories as a process of a centrepetal force of language and of the dominant, i.e. that of a ruling class, ideology. For example, grammar and phonetics can be seen as linguistic tools for constructing a unitary language (e.g. general pronunciation in English; rigsdansk in Denmark). The ideological unification, on the other hand, takes place through expression of a set of beliefs (e.g. political doctrines, religious dogmas, etc.).

The unitary language and the dominant ideology are thus a reaction to the bubbling chaos of heteroglossia of different languages and inherent in them different points of view, but this process is simultaneous in that there are always two forces at work, centrepetal and centrifugal.

Alongside the centrepetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralisation and disunification go forward (Ibid. 272)

Therefore at the times of social upheavals, which entail a deterioration of dominant ideology, the social heteroglossia is allowed to surge to the surface and break the hegemony of the official language/ideology. This process leads to a *relativisation* of the dominant language and its social significance by rendering it as just one language out of many others. According to Bakhtin it is this relativity of languages or speeches that the novelistic genre, out of all other genres, is best to portray.

Heteroglossia and Literature

We saw above that heteroglossia is an inherently social phenomenon that surrounds and stratifies every language no matter how unitary it pretends to be. We also saw that heteroglossia is organised dialogically as a simultaneous play between the centrepetal and centrifugal forces of language, the play in which the unitary language and inherent in it ideology both give shape to heteroglossia and are themselves shaped by it in a dialogic process. The heteroglot nature of language is important for our understanding of how Bakhtin works out his dialogic approach to literature. It follows that just as a unitary language that organises heteroglossia without being able to silence or eliminate it completely, so the text, as an artistic representation of language, cannot completely avoid reflecting the heteroglossia in its form and content. Therefore, depending on how the given text responds to the heteroglossia of its epoch, has led Bakhtin to distinguish, albeit only theoretically,³ between two lines of stylistic development of literature: the monologic and dialogic or the first and second lines (Bakhtin 2001: 367). The monologic text/novel approaches heteroglossia from above (Bakhtin uses a metaphor of a lid placed on a boiling pot), which results, among other things, in a uniaxented

³ Because in reality the two lines often overlap, so the difference between monoglot/dilogic or heteroglot becomes a matter of degree and depends, as we shall see, on, among other things, genre and the representation of the other's discourse.

quality of the work's formal composition and the singleness of authorial point of view.⁴ The author of a monologic novel, as it were, strips the literary language of all alien accents and points of view that, as we saw above, stratify the language from within along the generic, professional, social, etc., lines. As a result of such stylistic, generic and ideological monologisation, the language of the novel and its point of view appear to lie on one single plane. As opposed to this, the dialogic, heteroglot novel, as it were, welcomes heteroglossia into the text and instead of subduing its 'different-speechness' to one authorial accent, the author speaks through each of the incorporated languages and genres.

[The first stylistic line's] primary characteristic is the fact that it knows only a single language and a single style (which is more or less rigorously consistent); heteroglossia remains *outside* the novel, although it does nevertheless have its effect on the novel as a dialogising background in which the language and the world of the novel is polemically and forensically implicated. [...] The second line, to which belong the greatest representatives of the novel as a genre (...), incorporates heteroglossia into a novel's composition, exploiting it to orchestrate its own meaning and frequently resisting altogether any unmediated and pure authorial discourse (Bakhtin 2001:375).

Thus, by leaving heteroglossia outside of its composition, the monologic text polemically and forensically (i.e. judgingly) reacts to or dialogises against the heteroglot background of its epoch. The author's discourse in such a text is employed in order to defend his/her own point of view, style and manner of speaking, perceiving, etc., as distinct from those of others. In fact, the discourse of the author, depending on the genre, may be coloured in many different ways as, for example:

In biographies (glorification, *apologia*); in autobiographies (self-glorification, self-justification); in confessions (repentance); in judicial and political rhetoric (defence and accusation); in rhetorical satire (a pathos-charged exposure) and many others (Ibid. 407)

Thus, if in the monologic novel the discourse is self-centred, direct and pathos-charged, in the heteroglot novel the author, on the contrary, shies away from the pathos-charged, direct discourse as his/her only artistic medium of expression but uses instead, what Bakhtin calls, novelistic pathos (Ibid.394)⁵. The novelistic pathos (i.e. that of the second stylistic line) does not have its own

⁴ My description of the distinction between monoglot and heteroglot novel-type is taken primarily from Bakhtin's three different essays 'Epic and Novel', 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' and 'Discourse in the Novel'. All of them published in *The Dialogic Imagination – Four Essays* by Mikhail Bakhtin, University of Texas Press 2001.

⁵ Bakhtin uses *novelistic* because for him the novel that realises its full generic potential is always a heteroglot (and also polyphonic) type of novel. The novel as a genre is thus opposed to many monoglot genres such as classical drama, epic, classical poetry, etc. Bakhtin calls these genres dead and ossified, because they have already formed as genres, whereas

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discourse but has to borrow discourses of others, that is, it restores other genres that have lost their unconditional power to mean as independent, sealed off and absolute perceptions of the world.

For the person writing the novel there is no language to express a purely individualised pathos: he must, against his will, mount the pulpit, assume the role of preacher, judge, etc. [...] In pathos-charged speech one cannot take the first step without first conferring on oneself some power, rank, position, etc. In this lies the "curse" of novelistic pathos when it is expressed directly (Ibid.395).

In the heteroglot novel the author does not speak in one language but through heteroglossia of his/her epoch and the author's own voice and point of view are thus present to varying degrees in each of the represented languages. In this connection Bakhtin distinguishes between the author's own, direct discourse and the represented or double-voiced discourse type (Bakhtin 1997:185). Bakhtin distinguishes between many different types of double-voiced discourse that he finds in Dostoyevsky's polyphonic works, but the principle that underlies them all is the distance/proximity that exists between the author's discourse and his point of view, on the one hand, and the represented or voiced one, on the other, in different parts of the narrative. Double-voiced discourse type means thus that there is a second (i.e. that of the author) voice present in the represented language (e.g. the language of a character or generic language). Roughly speaking, if the author's voice merges with the voiced one (i.e. dialogic relationship of agreement) we have a stylisation of the given language, while if the author's voice opposes the represented one (i.e. the dialogic relationship of disagreement) we have a parody (Ibid. 199). Thus, in the monologic text, that is the text that has only one fully valid point of view and has one standard language, the represented or double-voiced discourse is always either parodically or polemically (or both) repudiated (i.e. the represented discourse's manner of speaking and thinking is denied any signifying power) (Ibid.82). While in the heteroglot novel the author accents each of the represented languages and thereby allowing his own and the character's points of view to sound together. The author thus appears to converse or dialogise with the other's speech and not just dominate it. Dostoyevsky, according to Bakhtin, was a master of talking to his characters and the polyphonic form is the result of the author's respect to the characters' independent voices, ideas and consciousnesses. Polyphony, albeit very similar, is not the same as heteroglossia. While the two concepts may converge in the aspect of many (poly) and different (hetero) voices and speeches that are present in the text, the former deals

the novel still continues to develop itself as a genre and as such has no particular canon. When incorporated into the novel, the classical (dead) genres are said to be novelised, that is, they coalesce into a generic and stylistic, in short, heteroglot hybrid (see Epic and Novel in *The Dialogic Imagination*)

with the position of the author while the latter with the diversity of speech styles and genres (Morson 1990: 232). So, the polyphonic novel is necessarily heteroglot but not vice versa. That is, as we saw above, the monologic novel can also be heteroglot (by, for example, incorporating many character-voices), but by allowing only one voice, i.e. that of the author, to sound as the only fully meaningful one. The monologic novel, thus, does not exploit heteroglossia as a potent *form-shaping force*.

In Bakhtin, the form-shaping force means the force that shapes (compositionally, artistically) the text and is always connected to the point of view/the idea that sees and organises the text (Bakhtin 2001: 332-3). So, if there is only one point of view, one idea, as in the monologic type of novel, then the composition is equally monologic and not polyphonic. However, even if the novel is heteroglot and not monologically organised (e.g. Cervantes's Don Quixote), it is still not polyphonic, despite the fact that both novel types belong to the second, heteroglot line of literary development. This is because the polyphonic novel is a special type of the heteroglot novel, the novel that has been created by Dostoyevsky and therefore stands apart from other novels in the history of literature (Morson 1990: 231). Bakhtin, on the basis of Dostoyevsky's works, has identified different characteristic features in the relationship between the author and the characters such as, for example, the character is not finalized as an object (i.e. given closed identity) but open as a subject and therefore has a potential for change/development in the course of the novel (ibid. 239). Another important feature is the representation of the other's discourse, which in Dostoyevsky can attain such a degree of freedom that it begins to polemize with/oppose the author's own direct discourse, that is, it denies the objectifying/reifying power of the author, disagrees with him (Bakhtin 1997: 197).

I will not explore all the characteristics of a polyphonic novel here; rather I will try to use them contextually as the analysis develops. Conrad's HOD is, of course, not polyphonic to the same degree as Dostoyevsky's novels, nor is it particularly heteroglot as we shall see. However, by identifying the novel's relation to the heteroglossia of its epoch, we can analyse how the discourse is structured in the text in terms of style, genre and point of view and how all of these tie in with the formal, compositional unity of the novel. It should therefore be pointed out that even though Bakhtin clearly favours the heteroglot, messy type of novels, it does not mean that the monoglot literature has no right to exist or that it is necessarily bad literature. In fact, the monologic literary works are by far overrepresented in the history of literature and it is the novels of Dostoevsky,

Cervantes, Rabelais and others, that stand out as a few great books of life that celebrate its grotesque body (Holquist 2005: 90).

Thus, for Bakhtin the true novel is the novel that realises its full potential as a genre, which is to embody and represent the ongoing dialogue of life. Such novel speaks through the major voices of its epoch and thereby exhibits the epoch's historical, unrepeatable particularity and complexity and not just one (that of the dominant class) of its facets (Bakhtin 2001: 411). This in-built potential in the novelistic genre is what Bakhtin terms "novelness", that is, the least reductive literary incorporation of heteroglossia of life into the text (Holquist 2002:85). Thus, the novel as a genre strives for a "more complex modelling of the world" (Morson 1990:306).

An active incorporation of heteroglossia into the text results in a relativisation of the literary language, that is, it loses its one-sidedness and hence naiveté as being the only viable representing medium (Ibid. 303-4). This is why Bakhtin emphasises popular culture of laughter (and its most prominent celebration in carnival-rituals) as one of the strands of the historical development of the novel (Lundquist et al 2001: 38). Popular laughter, according to Bakhtin, has played a crucial role in destroying epic distance and hence the homogeneous, crystal clarity of its genre in which the image of man is fully externalised (e.g. it does not have any inner self) (Bakhtin 2001:35). Accordingly, during the carnival the official way of seeing the world (e.g. king or priest) is mocked and debased. The values are inverted and thereby relativised by, for example, allowing a fool or a beggar to be a king. The grotesque body is celebrated and hence opposed to the overshadowing importance of spirit and the dogmatic suppression of bodily instincts and desires (Bakhtin 1997: 122-32)⁶. In literature, the carnivalisation of genres has taken place, most importantly, through an incorporation of lower strata, extraliterary genres such as, for example, sailor jargon into the novel. Such extraliterary genres, if not monologically objectified, will participate in a dialogue with other genres and, most importantly, will in the end deform and thereby enrich the standard literary language/dialect by making it heteroglot.⁷ The two or more represented languages/genres/styles, as it were, will deform each other (i.e. lose their original, extraliterary distinctiveness) and in the end will coalesce into an artistic hybrid that consists of different styles and genres of expression as well as different points of view that each of these languages has brought along with it into the novel

⁶ Carnival rituals are very complex and their influence on literature has taken place on many different levels as well as over many centuries. Here it is important to emphasise the fundamental "*joyful relativity* of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierachical) position" (Ibid. 124).

⁷ Dialect, because it is understood as just one language within the internally heteroglot unitary language. The literary language/dialect is the language of the educated class that, when novelised, becomes increasingly heteroglot across the social strata and not only in terms of literary intertextuality (that is, across literary works written in literary language).

(Bakhtin 2001: 294). The author's role in the heteroglot, dialogic novel is therefore to build "a superstructure over these languages [the superstructure that is] made up of his own intentions and accents, which then becomes dialogically linked with them" (Ibid. 409). The author, as mentioned above, accents various languages and thereby shows his/her distance towards them. The author thus speaks *through* the languages and not (polemically/forensically, etc.) *against* them. The novelistic dialogue is therefore a special type of dialogue because it can never be exhausted pragmatically or dramatically, precisely because it reflects the ongoing and ever-conflicting dialogue of inherently social and heterogeneous forces.

Novelistic dialogue is pregnant with an endless multitude of dialogic confrontations, which do not and cannot resolve it, and which, as it were, only locally (as one out of many possible dialogues) illustrate this endless, deep-lying dialogue of languages; novel dialogue is determined by the very socio-ideological evolution of languages and society ((Ibid.365)

Methodological Considerations – Positioning of the Problem

Above I have tried to provide a rough outline of Bakhtin's ideas on the dialogic nature of novelistic discourse. The fundamental starting point for application of Bakhtin's ideas to the work of literary art should be its relation to and articulation of the heteroglossia of its epoch. We have seen that the nature of genre is crucial for how the text relates to heteroglossia, that is, whether it is polemically opposed or, on the contrary, strives to speak through different voices and genres. In the case of HOD it is therefore important to examine how the story relates to its dialogising background, what genres it contains and how these affect the narrator's discourse throughout the story. The uncovering of the story's dialogising background calls for a certain degree of historical contextualisation, especially the type of information that can help us to understand certain peculiarities of the described context, character traits and their discourse. The difficulty of uncovering heteroglossia in HOD is determined by at least two important factors. First of all, the story is set in the colonial context, that is, away from the living heteroglossia of the imperial society. Secondly, Marlow narrates about his *personal* experiences in an alien, unknown to his audience context. Due to these two closely interrelated factors, the dialogising background in HOD appears to be mute for the readers, but not for Marlow who is constantly dialogising against it. It becomes thus interesting to examine the role of Marlow's dialogising background in different parts

of the story and examine how it affects his discourse in terms of genre(s), tone, style of narration, etc.

Although the story is told predominantly by Marlow, he is not the only character in the story. Heteroglossia enters into the novel not only together with a genre, but more importantly as an image of a speaking person (Bakhtin 2001:335). In HOD there are different characters, such as the hidden narrator, the harlequin Russian, Kurtz and pilgrims, who all may be said to represent different points of view and thereby determine Marlow's discourse in relation to them.

Finally, it is important to examine Marlow's own discourse as a heteroglot phenomenon, a discourse that is stratified from within by different languages and genres. In HOD Marlow speaks with what I call a cleft tongue, that is, he combines in his discourse/narrative voice two distinct languages: the literary language and a sailor jargon. Furthermore, each of these languages carries with it its own, conducive for its expression style of speaking and genre(s), as well as different points of view on the world. Thus, while the literary language may be deployed by Marlow in order to articulate abstract, sophisticated thoughts in long sentences, the sailor jargon, on the other hand, is characterised by its terseness and directness of communication. It is therefore interesting to analyse how each of these discourse types affects Marlow's narration of the story, i.e., their role and function in Marlow's telling of the story.

The Age of Empire in HOD

The purpose with this chapter is to provide a short introduction to the historical background of Conrad's epoch, imperialism, and see how this theme is reflected in the story. In the following chapters I will address more closely the different parts of the narrative that, I hope, will make this reading more nuanced as well as provide new perspectives on the text.

It can hardly escape a general reader of Conrad's novels that their historical period is the age of European imperialism. HOD in particular articulates very clearly the new identity of Europe as a conqueror, as a new Roman empire that had at Conrad's time reached a status of a fully-fledged master and teacher. In HOD Marlow evokes the image of Romans who in their time came to civilise Britain, and now it is now the turn of the British to pass on the light of civilisation (HOD: 18-20). The historical period of the late 19th century does allow for such parallels between the Roman Empire and Britain, for it is toward the end of the 19th century that European domination had

reached its culmination in the “scramble for Africa” – a partition of the African continent among European nations in the course of 1880s and 1890s (Ashcroft et. al. 2005: 154). Toward the end of the 19th century the sun, as the phrase goes, never set on the British Empire because of its colonial possessions across the globe. But while the 19th century saw an exploding pace of imperial outreach and the growing number of colonial possessions, some of the values that justified this domination in the first place were called into question by science, different art forms and in the end, ironically enough, by the imperial opening of the world itself.

The Victorian age that lasted from 1830 to the death of queen Victoria in 1901, was marked by a thoroughgoing reassessment of values and beliefs pertaining to the origin of the universe (geologist Charles Lyell 1820), the origin of species (Darwin 1859) and the alternative order of society (Karl Marx), plus the increasing contact with the non-western world (opening of Japan in 1854), seriously questioned the European view of the world as pre-eminent (Peters 2006: 28). This wave of questioning and re-evaluation of the European culture and its absolute truths had reflected itself in science (relativist physics), painting (Gauguin) and literature (modernism) (Ibid. 29).

Similarly, HOD can be seen as an attempt to distort the absolute values of the western culture by introducing an element of darkness into its own heart and to make the imperial citizens aware of the other side of the imperial domination, the one that leads to a self-destruction and to a self-inflicted “horror, horror” of Kurtz.

The opening pages of the story can be said to directly relate to the metaphor of the never-setting-sun. The hidden narrator evokes the great spirit of Empire and its successful voyages and conquests as well as its celebrities, but simultaneously also introduces a second, more negative aspect. Thus, every “light” symbol of Empire is matched by its darker counterpart. This bifocal representation takes place on different levels throughout the frame narrative by the hidden narrator. Beginning with the setting of the story itself that takes place at the sunset and where the greatest town on earth is surrounded by gloom of the evening and, as the story progresses, the town is plunged into complete darkness of the night. Earlier described as the “greatest town on earth” is only later to be referred to as “the monstrous town [that] was still marked ominously on the sky, *a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars*” (HOD: 18, my italics). Here the language is imbued with oppositions and contradictions that mark the particularity of the narrator’s vision. This is the case not only in the use of tropes of light but also in the representation of more material symbols of the epoch. Thus, on the more explicit level the opposition takes place between success/failure of the imperial enterprise, whereas on the less explicit level the narrator also penetrates into the very heart

of the imperial quest and this time its ethical and moral rather than material consequences that are in his focus. Here is a paragraph that articulates tersely the spirit of the age and sets the frame for the Marlow's subsequent story.

The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it has borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled – the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on their conquests – and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith – the adventurers and the settlers, [...]. 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 sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth!...

The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore.

Among the explicit descriptions of the imperial ups and downs, the names of Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Franklin mark the more symbolic beginning of the British imperial history and its symbolic end. Drake was the first man who circumnavigated the globe, while Franklin, on the other hand, successfully opened the North-West Passage to the Pacific. However, for Franklin it was his last expedition, his ships (*Erebus* and *Terror*) got icebound and his crew had to resort to cannibalism in their attempts to survive (HOD: xv). In this light the passage appears to be expressed with a slight ironic distance in that it does affirm the zenith of the Imperial physical dominance, while at the same time also casts a shadow of eclipse on its moral⁸ and ethical underpinnings. As the story develops, these allusions move to the fore and assume the central place in the narrative. For example, in the scene onboard the steamer Marlow wonders why the natives with allegedly cannibalistic traits do not, in the merciless name of hunger, have a go at one of the pilgrims and “have a good tuck-in for once” (HOD: 70). Although Marlow is conscious of the colonial hierarchy and all the punitive measures taken against disobedient natives, he nevertheless affirms that hunger is beyond anything artificially acquired (moral principles, beliefs, etc.):

⁸ Sir Francis Drake was also reported to be a self-seeking, violent man and most probably a murderer, whose sea-adventures looked more like lootings (Hampson 1989:12).

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Don't you know the devilry of lingering starvation, its exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its sombre and brooding ferocity? It's really easier to face bereavement, dishonour, and the perdition of one's soul – than this kind of prolonged hunger. Sad, but true (HOD: 71).

That the fellow cannibals do not succumb to the lingering starvation is for Marlow a mystery greater than anything else, for it shows that these “savages” show more restraint than their colonial masters were showing some years earlier, during the quest for the North-West Passage. But the allusion to the restraint appears to be a mock one, for it serves the purpose to ironise the greatness of the Empire and the nobleness of its citizens rather to affirm the restraint of the cannibals. Likewise, the last sentence in the quote above is provocatively reminiscent of the allusion to Franklin's crew's cannibalism in a book that Conrad is reported to have read many times and had even dwelled on at length in one of his essays “Geography and Some Explorers” (HOD: xv). In *The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas*, the captain McClintock, who found the traces of Franklin's expedition and affirmed its fate, writes: “that amongst all the relics of the ill-fated expedition no preserved meat or vegetable tins were found, either about the cairns or along the line of retreat; the inference is as plain as it is painful (reprinted in HOD: xv)”. Marlow's assumed seriousness and importance when sealing his long-winded rhetoric on dehumanising effect of hunger with “Sad, but true” is a concise serio-comic evocation of McClintock's “as plain as it is painful”. Marlow seems to be polemically alluding to the infamous instance of European cannibalism, but the way he does it feels more like an act of ‘teasing’ rather than as a serious statement or argument that questions the purported superiority of the colonisers. This and other allusions constitute Marlow's polemic with his audience, the polemic that sometimes is suavely teasing and elusive, as in the example above, while at other times it is more open and aggressive, as we will see in the third chapter of the analysis.

So, we can say that Marlow's critique of the imperial ideology in HOD takes place on two different levels: the explicit, political and more implicit, moral levels. However, these two levels are not interdependent in the sense that they are two sides of the same coin. Marlow nowhere in the story takes a stance towards the broadly political issue of imperialism by either repudiating or endorsing it. Marlow's political critique in HOD is specifically directed at the particular instance of the King Leopold of Belgium and his purely material aspirations in Africa and for whom the civilising mission was only a comfortable guise. The first part of HOD deals thus with the description and refutation of the Belgian way of conducting imperialism, to which Marlow opposes the British way when he, for example, in the company's office looks at the map with the European colonial

possessions on which the colour of red marks the British territory: “There was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there [...]” (HOD: 25). Marlow also seems to endorse ‘the British way’ when he at the beginning of the story proclaims that the only thing that makes the present day’s British Empire different from the Roman Empire is efficiency and unselfish adherence to the civilising idea behind the conquest (HOD: 20). But in the following chapters (2 and 3) the critique of imperialism leaves the political sphere and addresses more moral consequences of the imperial conquest and its devotion to a civilising mission. The shift of focus from the political to moral aspects of colonialism serves to indirectly imply that irregardless of the political and ideological frame behind colonialism (British or Belgian), the idea of the inherent superiority (upon which the civilising mission is hinged) is bound to end up in perversion and misuse, especially when it is combined with more material aspirations. Hence the pan-European nature of Kurtz character – “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” – points to the broad moral and ethical concerns about imperialism expressed in the story (HOD: 83). This dilemma of the civilising mission and its uneasy partnership with the material interests of Empire, expresses the ideology of the so-called liberal imperialism, powerfully embodied in the figure of Kurtz who is on the one hand an emissary of light and truth and, on the other, a brutal murderer who preaches to “Exterminate all the brutes!” The inseparability of the two ideals (i.e. moral and material) and their mutual undermining are at the heart of the imperial mission and it is this paradox that is effectively captured by Marlow’s foreshadowing trope in the beginning of the story:

“The conquest of the 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. What redeems it 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 (HOD: 20)”

The ivory quest gets the better of Kurtz’s noble and selfless ideals and makes him set “himself up as something for others to ‘bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to’” (HOD: xxx).

In this light HOD appears to discuss not so much the pros and cons of imperialism and colonialism as such (i.e. as a political doctrine), but rather it tries to explore the difficulties facing one in trying to live up to the selfless idea within the framework of cultural and racial superiority. Kurtz as a character embodies thus two different facets. On the one hand he is an example of the liberal-imperialist spirit of his time, while on the other hand he exposes a personal-individual challenge of conducting the civilising mission in the colonial context that grants him by virtue of his whiteness

an unlimited power. In this connection it is important to specify that HOD is an autobiographical account as much as it is also a fictitious one. The sophisticated combination of the two strands has resulted in a narrative that is full of indeterminacies and ambivalences. For example, the downfall of Kurtz is often taken as an example of Marlow's and Conrad's refutation of imperialism, while the story itself cannot support more than that there is a potential moral risk at the heart of colonialism and therefore the story should be seen more as a moral and ethical amendment to rather than as the wholesale discarding of the imperial idea. Marlow's own idea of Empire and the civilising mission (which is *not* in the focus of the story but only lurks through it) is that the one who does the implementing of the idea (i.e. the imperialist) should have the inner strength and utter selflessness. What *is* in the focus, however, is the impact or, as Marlow himself says, the effect the wilderness has on one. Marlow's emphasis on the effect is an attempt to explore, first of all, what happened to him personally and only after, in order to make his experience intelligible to his audience, to broaden the significance of the effect onto the general, ideological level. The figure of Kurtz should therefore be seen simultaneously on two levels: on the level of liberal-imperialism and its potential vulnerability and on the more personal level that, as I will argue, realises the autobiographical material in the story. In this connection it may also prove worthwhile to try to roughly reconstruct the original journey that Marlow/Conrad has made, the journey whose simple chronology is blurred on purpose and therefore should in itself be seen as a narrative distancing device on the par with the frame narrative deployed in the story. The narrative of HOD is structured as a classic adventure novel, in which the story or the hero's journey is oriented towards something unknown, a mystery. This is the most basic element of suspense that organises an adventure story. Similarly, in HOD Kurtz is an object of mystery, a remarkable person who not only survives in the heart of the wilderness but also succeeds in combining the most perfect ideals of his time: the civilising mission and commerce. The most important element of suspense is Kurtz's liberal manifesto, the reading of which Marlow discloses only right before reaching Kurtz himself, Kurtz who had already degenerated into violence. On the basis of this, the following reconstruction of Marlow's original journey is possible (and is actually supported by the story itself!): While still in Brussels, attending a job interview, Marlow is also informed that it is a part of the company's policy to contribute to the civilisation of Africa. Marlow is given a report (presumably written by Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society or by one of the company's own, prominent agents who gathered his own material or both), where it is stated that, judging by the reaction of the natives, they think we are supernatural beings, which we should exploit to promote our values, material as

well as moral ones, etc., Marlow's longing to see Kurtz is his longing to see how these ideas are implemented in practice and until he reaches Kurtz (or some other horror) he sees the colonial context through this ideological lens. In this, in my view, we can see the original ideological view of Marlow before he went to Congo. This view or, what we also can call, Marlow's ideological naiveté is muffled in the story proper due to the retrospective telling by Marlow who appears now as a wise man, a Buddha-like figure. The second original view Marlow seems to have held is the romantic idea of adventure or the romantic naiveté. Marlow's primary motivation to go to Africa stems from his childhood dreams, inspired by looking at his atlas, as he himself says in the beginning of the story. This type of naiveté, however, is also suppressed in Marlow's narrative voice and we also hear that for the present Marlow the glamour of adventure is now off (HOD: 22). In this light, I propose to see HOD as a story that tries to convey the personal becoming of the main hero, Marlow, (i.e. losing of his naiveté) within the larger historical and ideological context of imperialism. From this perspective the fundamental ambivalence of the narrative can be said to stem from the noncoincidence between Marlow's actual narrative voice and his original experiences, the nature of which Marlow, nevertheless, tries to convey. Marlow's difficulty as a narrator lies thus in trying to communicate the original experience in a voice that is devoid of both the ideological and the romantic naiveté that the original Marlow possessed. In my view this overarching perspective is valuable in order to explain some of the peculiarities of Marlow's discourse in HOD and therefore also to explain some of the ambivalences of the text.

The Form-Shaping Ideology and the Narrator Position in HOD

For Bakhtin the speaking person in the novel is always an *ideologue* and his/her words and statements are *ideologemes* (Bakhtin 2001: 333). The represented discourse of different characters thus becomes the image of different points of view on the world and not "a mere aimless verbal play" (Ibid.). As we saw in the theory chapter, heteroglossia may organise the novel in different ways. The author may, on the one hand, allow a multiplicity of equal socio-historical voices to be represented in the novel as an ongoing dialogue of different incompatible points of view (the second, dialogic stylistic line). Or the author may speak in his own, direct discourse against the background of the social heteroglossia of his epoch (the first, monologic line).

HOD quite clearly, in my view, belongs to the first, monologic line of novel's development. Marlow is the first person narrator whose direct discourse and imbedded in it point of view alone shape the story and its form. In the monologic artistic world everything gravitates towards the unity of a single worldview, single authorial consciousness. Under the conditions of artistic monologism, Bakhtin writes, all ideological material is divided into two categories – true and signifying thoughts and ideas are affirmed by the author, while untrue ones are not affirmed or polemically repudiated by him, so they in the end lose their power to mean (Bakhtin 1997: 80). Thus, in the monologic work all valid and fully signifying ideas have the single ideational accent, the existence of the second accent is perceived as a flaw and a contradiction (Ibid. 82). According to Bakhtin, an affirmed and fully valid authorial idea performs a triple function in the organisation of a monologic text:

“first, *the principle for visualising and representing the world*, the principle behind the *choice* and unification of material, the principle behind *ideological single-toned quality* of all the elements of the work; second, the idea can be presented as a more or less distinct or conscious deduction drawn from the represented material; third and finally, an authorial idea can receive direct expression in the *ideological position of the main hero*” (Bakhtin 1997: 82-3; italics in the original).

The first two organising principles of the idea can be said to determine each other in that the first principle behind both the choice and unification of the material makes it possible for us to deduce the idea that stands behind the represented material. In the case of HOD one of the most important features of the narration is that the story is told in retrospect, which means that both the hidden narrator and Marlow know the end of the story before they actually tell it. Thus, the downfall of Kurtz is present in the story from the very beginning as, for instance, when the hidden narrator describes the mournful gloom that hangs over London. Accordingly, Marlow's gloomy and distrustful view of the colonial context and its nature is in keeping with his final opinion of the colonial continent as a heart of darkness. But the idea that shapes and organises the text is different in different parts of the story. Thus in the first part of HOD, Marlow's description of the Belgian Congo is clearly governed by his refutation of the futile and violent methods of the Belgians. According to Bakhtin, the idea as a principle of representation merges with the form and thereby determines all formal accents as well as the artistic style, tone and the basic generic and stylistic characteristics of the work (Ibid. 83). Thus in the first part of HOD the narrator's ideological disagreement or repudiation of the Belgian brutal and futile colonial methods have affected both the

tone and style of the narration. Marlow's disavowal is seen in his cold and impersonal description of the colonial settings as well as in their obliterated and unnatural appearance. Both the style and the genre resemble a journalist report that meticulously informs the reader about all small details of the destruction the colonial occupation has done to the nature and not the least to the indigenous population. The dramatic descriptions of human subjugation alternate with openly sarcastic tone when describing the colonisers. Here is a paragraph in which Marlow describes the 'grove of death' where worn-out, black slaves retreat to die and then, in order to achieve a stark contrast, he switches to the description of a white man who is the company's chief accountant:

Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up. One, with his chin propped on his knees, stared at nothing, in an intolerable and appalling manner: his brother phantom rested its forehead, as if overcome with great weariness; and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or pestilence [...]

I didn't want any more *loitering in the shade*, and I made haste towards the station. When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision. [...] Moreover, I respected the fellow. Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy; but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearances. That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character (HOD: 35-6; my italics)

It is indeed difficult not to perceive the intended drama and sarcasm in Marlow's description as well as the idea of repudiation and critique that lies behind these formal features, the idea that organises the first part of the story. Marlow's detached and not sensationalist tone of the narration most probably derives from the fact that the King Leopold of Belgium was infamous in Europe for his openly material interests in Congo. So, even despite the attempted anonymity of the colonial context, the name of the real location could hardly escape more or less informed reader of Conrad. Perhaps (and this is just a hypothesis that needs a proper verification) the anonymity is attempted exactly because the Belgian Congo was an object of everybody's critique at the time Conrad wrote the story and he wanted to avoid the story to sound as yet another newspaper article that criticises the Belgians. But the anonymity of the colonial context could also be explained by the relative unimportance the first part plays in the story. Marlow's extreme and unreserved sarcasm directed at the "flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly"(p.34) that organises the first chapter, is just a frame around another, more important story that describes the journey upriver and the rescue of Kurtz. Thus, the idea of repudiation and the genre of parody of manners that result from this form-shaping idea in the first chapter lose subsequently their dominant form-shaping force

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in the second and third chapters, in which the shaping idea is more fragmented and therefore less visible than it is in the first chapter. Accordingly, in the first chapter we get a feeling that the story stands still while Marlow casually directs his fundamentally sarcastic vision on everything that surrounds him. But parallel to Marlow's ridiculing of the Belgian colonial endeavours, we see a gradual introduction of an element of suspense: among the commonplace greed and opportunist backbiting of the pilgrims the figure of the remarkable Kurtz, a man with moral virtues and noble ideas appears at the horizon. Marlow's sarcasm, that before was rather diffuse and randomly directed, now gets gradually focused to introduce the figure of Kurtz whose magnificence as an unusual and efficient trader becomes intriguing and full of suspense through the words of petty-minded, greedy and lazy pilgrims. Against the background of sheer decay and hopelessness the figure of Kurtz embodies the new hope, the sacred balance of the imperial age - the combination of a moral virtue (that underpins the civilising mission) with trade or in Kurtz's own words (which are sarcastically put in the mouth of the manager who shows his annoyance at the vagueness of their content):

"And the pestiferous absurdity of his talk," continued the other [the manager]; "he bothered me enough when he [Kurtz] was here. 'Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanising, improving, instructing'. Conceive you – that ass! And he wants to be a manager! No it's –" Here he got choked by excessive indignation [...] (HOD:58).

Thus the first part of the story ends with Marlow's complete repudiation of the Belgian colonial business and their inefficiency, while he at the same time poses, in almost scholarly way, the idea that will be the overarching leitmotif of the next two parts of the story:

I had given up worrying myself about the rivets. One's capacity for that kind of folly is more limited than you would suppose. I said Hang! – and let things slide. I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz. I was not very interested in him. No. Still, I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all, and how he would set about his work when there (HOD: 55).

Marlow's description of the two pilgrim stations and their small, colonial society in the first part of the story is artistically formed as a parody of manners. While the second and third parts are formed in the genre of a classic adventure story that is structured around the movement towards the mysteriously unknown (Kurtz) and on the way the hero (Marlow) receives help from others (the

harlequin) to get to his final destination. Central to the adventure novel is the idea of testing the hero, something that allows this genre to realise an enormous potential of ideological and psychological significance (Bakhtin 2001: 390). Thus, depending on the sociohistorical context of the given epoch, the idea of trial, embodied in the adventure genre, may help to organise around it a vast body of material and thereby realise the full potential of the genre (Ibid.). Marlow's journey upriver, which will be the focus of my analysis in the next chapter, is not a pure adventure that realises nothing but a naked plot of events, but on the contrary is a psychologically and ideologically freighted narration. In fact, the ratio of the story's events to the thoughts and reflections it originates is disproportionate to the clear advantage of the latter. Marlow's introductory simile "Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world [...]" (p.59) initiates an argument that grows gradually into a chapter-long polemic with Marlow's audience. Moral degradation of Kurtz constitutes the main form-shaping idea from this point on and until the end of the story and it is in the light of Kurtz's example that the travelling upriver part is organised. During the journey the savage temptations that are assumed to have fretted the soul of Kurtz are projected onto the auditors as well as onto Marlow himself. The trial of Kurtz by the wilderness thus also becomes the hypothetical trial of Marlow and his audience. The river, the jungle and its inhabitants likewise are "animalised" in keeping with Kurtz's succumbing to the primordial instincts and the power of wild nature to transform humans into savages, etc.

But the idea of testing may also embody an element of *Bildung* of the hero, that is, where the story is not a mere setting designed by the author to test an already preformed character and the idea he/she carries, but where the journey becomes a school of life experience that gradually changes/educates the hero (Bakhtin 2001: 392). Marlow's own *Bildung* is significantly muffled in HOD, not the least because the story, as mentioned above, is told in retrospect by an already jaded Marlow who sees the whole journey, from start to finish, in the light of what he knows about Kurtz. But Marlow also tries to downplay his naïve fascination for Kurtz, fascination that is only very carefully accentuated in the story. Thus Marlow's personal *Bildung* (i.e. transition from a naïve to an ideologically aware person) is not in the focus of the story. Rather Marlow tries to foreground his personal change *through* the figure of Kurtz: "It is his [Kurtz's] extremity I seem to have lived through" (HOD: 113). Foregrounding of Kurtz shifts the focus from personal, autobiographical experiences of Marlow to the ideological significance of Kurtz and the reader is thereby invited to undergo change through Kurtz and like Marlow come to see the root of the colonial darkness. In

this light HOD resembles more a moral parable rather than a pure adventure story, in which Marlow through the act of telling is revisiting the original (romantic) adventure with the ideological glasses on.

Kurtz's downfall as the prominent form-shaping idea in the second and third chapters affects Marlow's discourse in two fundamental ways. On the one hand, Marlow's discourse acquires more polemical and preaching tones than in the first chapter because Marlow, as opposed to his auditors, already possesses a superior moral knowledge received from Kurtz's example. But on the other hand, Marlow too, alongside with his auditors, is being tested by the temptations of the wilderness, which moderates his polemical tone and makes it at some point even sound confessional and apologetic (as, for example, when Marlow admits the difficulty to resist the powers of darkness). But, as we shall see, Marlow's apology on behalf of Kurtz is itself polemical, offered in order to promote the auditors' self-reflection.

In the second and third chapters the role of Marlow's auditors also changes. If in the first chapter they formed a conducive background for Marlow's unrestrained mocking of the Belgians (i.e. Marlow relied on their unconditional support and understanding), in the following two chapters they themselves become the objects of Marlow's discourse and feel themselves provoked by Marlow's comments. The all-pervasive sarcastic tone of the first chapter is thus superseded by the polemical one, as the form-shaping idea also changes from critique to the focus on moral issues of universal significance (at least for the white men). The openly sarcastic tone is however retained wherever the description of the pilgrims is involved.

To sum up. As in the first chapter, we can sense only one consciousness and one single accent behind the choice and organisation of the material in the second and the third chapters. The form-shaping idea that organises this part of the story can be deduced in the light of Kurtz, whose character embodies the culminating point not only of Marlow's navigation but also represents the ultimate point of Marlow's experience and polemic. So, if in the first chapter the narrator's relation to the heteroglot background of his sociohistorical context is marked by consent. In the second and third chapters Marlow, as it were, writes against the heteroglossia of his time by opposing his personal experiences and learning to the unawareness and incomprehension of his audience. In both of the cases, however, Marlow approaches heteroglossia from above, that is, monologically.

But HOD is a so-called frame-narrative in which Marlow's story is re-told by the hidden narrator and the latter's is written down on paper by the author. So, technically speaking, there are different

voices in the story and hence different layers of narrative distancing between the author and the characters who speak in the story. But as we saw above, in the monologic artistic representation there can only be one single consciousness that recognises and affirms only those thoughts that gravitate towards this consciousness, all others are either openly repudiated or denied any signifying power. Accordingly, as we also have seen in the previous chapter, the hidden narrator's presentation of the setting, before Marlow tells his story, is in keeping, imagery-wise, with the ultimate form-shaping idea of the story - the downfall of Kurtz. The dialogic relationship between Marlow and the hidden narrator is the relationship of agreement, in which the hidden narrator shares with Marlow his view of the continent as a heart of darkness. Furthermore, the hidden narrator's representation of Marlow as a Buddha in European clothes is in keeping with the preaching tone of Marlow's subsequent narration (the Buddha image associated with Marlow also indicates the ultimate wisdom and ideological awareness (embodied in the last words of Kurtz) that Marlow has attained of his epoch). And it is also the hidden narrator who is actively listening to Marlow and waiting "for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without lips in the heavy night-air of the river" (HOD: 50).

In this light we can liken the hidden narrator with what Bakhtin describes as a superaddressee, that is, an addressee who would "actively and sympathetically respond to the utterance and understand it in "just the right way"" (Morson 1990: 135). To be sure, the hidden narrator exhibits a perfect understanding of Marlow's tale and is therefore the only one of Marlow's other auditors who undergoes ideological change in his view of the imperial conquest as potentially dark. But because the hidden narrator has heard Marlow's story and understood it "just the right way" before he narrates it (and so has the author for that matter), the initial setting/frame is organised in accordance with the main form-shaping idea. The hidden narrator's glorification of Empire is therefore cast in the fundamentally ironic light and serves the purpose to provoke Marlow's story. Rhetorically speaking, the hidden narrator's words perform the function of the anacrisis, the device used by Socrates in which words are used to provoke a response that illuminates the ideological stance of the participant in a dialogue (Bakhtin 1997: 111). The purpose with the hidden narrator's words is thus two-fold: to illuminate the ideological position of the other auditors (to whom he pretends to belong) and thereby provoke Marlow and his viewpoint. But unlike Socrates who does not know the ultimate truth of the dialogue he helps to bring off, the hidden narrator shares Marlow's point of view from the very beginning and therefore the anacrisis is an artificially/monologically created one.

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Furthermore, the narrative distancing between Marlow and the hidden narrator, intended by the author, is unconsciously flawed when Marlow, denying the logic of the frame-narrative, openly relates to the hidden narrator's written word. This happens in the paragraph (quoted in full in the first chapter) in which the hidden narrator describes *to* the reader the prominent people of the Empire, the Knights, etc.. Thus, Marlow's *spoken* word (telling of the story) is a rejoinder to the hidden narrator's *written* word (writing of the story): "Light came out of this river since – you say Knights?" (HOD: 19). This obviously breaks the logic of speech production unless we assume that both characters are the product of the authorial monologic vision and vehicles for his direct discourse. But the two characters perform different functions in the narrative. Thus, if the hidden narrator assumes to be a part of the audience, both in terms of his discourse and the idea of empire, Marlow's position of a seaman and wonderer allows, on the other hand, an introduction of the material that counters this idea. But the two speakers serve, so to speak, the same master and therefore their viewpoints mutually supplement rather than contradict each other. Significantly, throughout the story, the hidden narrator performs the function of a mediator between Marlow and the readers, who are at the same time his auditors.⁹ This is seen in the quote above, in which the narrator exhibits his (and thereby also the reader's) alertness to Marlow's *uneasiness*, while he assumes the other auditors to be asleep. Furthermore, those few times when Marlow breaks off the narration, it is the hidden narrator who joins the story-line by paragraphs and sentences in loyal to Marlow's voice way, i.e. the way that does not undermine but on the contrary reinforces the verisimilitude of Marlow's story.

Interestingly, if in the beginning of the story the two characters' discourses and viewpoints are presented as different by the author, towards the end of the story Marlow's discourse, on the one hand, loses its sailorly accent and approaches the more formal discourse that the hidden narrator exhibited at the beginning of the story. The hidden narrator, on the other hand, comes to accept Marlow's gloomy view of the imperial conquest. The mergence of the two voices is also evident in the fact that the hidden narrator does not feel the need to further mediate or comment on Marlow's story after the latter finishes telling it (as opposed to the rather lengthy opening frame at the beginning of the story). We can thus say Marlow's discourse acquires its unmediated directedness as a signifying discourse, whose form and meaning is concisely but fully endorsed by the hidden

⁹ Conrad was writing HOD for the readership of Blackwood magazine that, like Marlow's audience, "is made up of males of the colonial service class" (HOD: xxxiii). I use the word 'audience' to refer to this implied readership of Conrad.

narrator towards the end of the story. I will come back to this point in the concluding chapter of the thesis, where I will discuss it in the light of the whole analysis.

We have established above the single accent and point of view common to both Marlow and the hidden narrator. The last link in the chain is the author whose form-shaping ideology, Bakhtin claims, can be found in the semantic position of the hero (Bakhtin 1997:83). The hero, who becomes a vehicle for the authorial direct discourse and representation of the world, is formally very different from other heroes because “the ideological principles that underlie the construction no longer merely represent the hero, defining the author’s point of view toward him, but are expressed by the hero himself, defining his own personal point of view on the world” (Ibid.). The hero is thus not turned into an object of representation but does the representing him/herself, so in the end we can perceive “*a single accent common both to the authorial representation and to the speech and experiences of the hero*” (Ibid. 84; original italics). As we have seen above, both Marlow’s and the hidden narrator’s discourses are not objectified as a part of the authorial construction, but are themselves objectifying and representing the world in accordance with their experiences.

Bakhtin mentions another important formal characteristic that points to the absence of any distance between the position of the hero and that of the author.

The hero, for example, is not closed and not internally finalized, like the author himself, and for that reason does not fit into the procrustean bed of the plot, which is in any case conceived as only one of many possible plots and is consequently in the final analysis merely accidental for the given hero (Ibid. 84)

The idea of hero’s unfinalisability stems from Bakhtin’s philosophical tractates, according to which we experience our own self’s time as “unfinished” (i.e. we perceive ourselves as having a continuation from the past, present and into the future), whereas we perceive the other’s self as “completed” and finalized here and now (Clark&Holquist 1984: 79).

Both Marlow and the hidden narrator are the only characters¹⁰ in the story who are not finalized or closed off internally, nor do they perform any strictly delineated function in the narrative, function that is specifically “tailored” for their objectified role in the story. Both of the heroes are unpredictable in their trajectory through the story (e.g. the irony of the hidden narrator’s opening passage; Marlow’s own choice of what to tell and what to suppress from his audience, etc.).

¹⁰ The harlequin figure exhibits, however, a higher degree of unfinalisability than other characters in the story. This is because, as I will argue, he realises some autobiographical material in the story.

Furthermore, Marlow is a recurring protagonist in other Conrad's novels, so his personality is not narrowly defined "to fit into the procrustean bed of the plot" in HOD. Quite revealingly, when the hidden narrator presents Marlow in HOD, he does it in the extremely open way that tells more about Marlow's difference from other seamen, rather than about Marlow as a finalized object of description ("The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class" (HOD:18)). Likening Marlow to a Buddha is likewise, as I argued above, in agreement with Marlow's self-assumed role as a preacher ("[...] I was loafing about, hindering you fellows in your work and invading your homes, just as though I had got a heavenly mission to civilise you" (p.21)). We thus never get to know what the authorial attitude to these two characters is, for he speaks through both of them unmediatedly. We, on the other hand, very tangibly get to feel the objectifying discourse of Marlow the narrator when he describes the pilgrims, the natives and the other characters in the story. Marlow's representing power, as we will see in the next chapter, is unlimited and uncontested both in terms of representing another character's speech (e.g. by manipulating the context) and in having the last word to say in the dialogue. This objectifying, direct discourse comes to the fore already in the first chapter and especially in the unmistakably parodic portrayals of the pilgrims.

In this chapter I have attempted to highlight how the story relates to heteroglossia by looking at the form-shaping idea that structures the different parts of the story. Despite the different layers of narrative distancing, the story is structured monologically, that is, it approaches heteroglossia from above by being organised in accordance with the authorial point of view. Marlow's discourse is unmediated and directly expresses the author's ideology. This is visible partly in Marlow's unfinalized, human-like character figure, which stands in stark contrast to the other objectified and one-sided characters in the story. Furthermore, Marlow's discourse is not represented but itself represents and therefore shapes the story, that is, the authorial representation and the speech and experiences of the hero concur. The discourse of the hidden narrator is directly deduced from Marlow's story and therefore is governed by the same, single accent of the author. The descriptions of the colonial settings in the first chapter are written against the background of common opinion, which allows the narrator an extreme form of parodic representation - sarcasm. From the end of the second chapter the form-shaping idea changes, which signals also a change in the orientation of Marlow's discourse. From this point on, Marlow's auditors stop being observers but take an active part in 'the trial by the wilderness' that organises the rest of the story. Monologic approach to heteroglossia thus becomes more problematic in the second and third chapters, for Marlow here

opposes his own voice and his experiences to the auditors'. The tone of Marlow's discourse and the style of its representation of the characters and the settings is determined by Marlow's opposition or polemic with the audience. In the following chapter I will examine more closely the particulars of Marlow's discourse in the second chapter of the story that describes the journey upriver in a steamboat. As I mentioned above, this chapter is structured as a classic adventure story, the genre that, through natural to its idea of trial, may realise a vast psychological and ideological mass of its sociohistorical epoch. The form-shaping idea that shapes this part of the story affects Marlow's representation in far more complex ways than in the first chapter and therefore deserves a more close attention.

Discourse in the Journey Upriver Part

The part of the story that narrates the journey upriver is markedly different from the parts that come before and after it. The major difference is in its use of discourse, which, in contradistinction to the first part and partly the last, third part, is more conscious of its own 'vulnerability' as a direct discourse. This vulnerability is due to the fact that Marlow's descriptions shift from the factually tangible object of the colonial coast to the focus on the more personal observations and evaluations, which Marlow opposes to his audience. Discourse-wise this shift implies that while the repudiation of the colonial presence of Belgians allowed for an openly sarcastic tone of the narration in the first part of the story, in the journey upriver part Marlow tries to generalise on the basis of his own experience, which entails a transformation of a documentaristic directedness of his discourse to a form of a hidden and partly even open polemic with his audience in the remaining two chapters. Furthermore, Marlow, by adopting a polemically-moralising tone towards his audience, can no longer count on their support as he did in the first part. The sarcastic tone in this part and until the end of the story is fainter due to the change in the form-shaping idea that here focuses on the moral-universal rather than on the particular instances of colonialism (i.e. Belgian colonialism). The focus on the universality also implies that Marlow's own discourse no longer purely represents but is itself an object of representation, that is, Marlow becomes more aware of his own role as a narrator and ideologist, the role that he now has to defend and argue for. But the opposition of Marlow's point of view is stated very carefully and gradually throughout the journey. For example, Marlow deploys self-irony in order to assert his belongingness to the group he opposes to, but from which he is also able to detach himself through the distinctiveness of his experience. This detachment in

turn allows him to achieve the ironic and hence polemical distance towards his audience. Marlow's indirectness and cautiousness while opposing and arguing with his audience is also evident in his use of discourse. Marlow operates with what I defined earlier as a cleft tongue, that is, the deployment of two different but equally valid discourses while narrating the story.

Marlow combines a literary, written language, expressed in longer sentences and with a tinge of poetic abstractedness, together with a professional sailor jargon, in which sentences are shorter and expressed in a more colloquial, spoken style. The combination and mediation between these two speech types allow Marlow not only to achieve a more versatile representation of the object, but also to shift the focus to and away from the object he represents, the device, as we shall see, Marlow deploys during his polemic with the audience.

As we know, each language of heteroglossia has its own intentionality and point of view in-built in it, which allows it to stratify the unitary language. Similarly, each of these two distinct languages used by Marlow allows him to represent an object from a different perspective and in a different from each other way. The peculiarity of Marlow's narrating mode lies thus in his ability to speak through both of these languages unmediatedly, that is, directly, without any distance. This means that Marlow does not treat, for example, the sailor jargon as an exotic object of description, but as an equally potent medium to convey his thoughts and views on the world. The two languages are thus in a constant dialogue with each other and despite their different and at times even opposing ways of perceiving the world, they mutually supplement rather than contradict each other. The absence of a contradiction between the two is secured by the monologic, single accent of the narration, in which a contradiction, if it had occurred, would have been perceived as a flaw. However, as we will see, a certain degree of tension between the two is palpable as well as the narrator's attempts to eradicate it.

According to Bakhtin, when an extra-literary language/dialect, such as in our case the sailor jargon, is appropriated by the literary language it loses to a certain degree its quality as closed socio-linguistic system, that is, it gets deformed in the process and therefore ceases to be a mere jargon or a dialect (Bakhtin 2001: 294). However, the dialect, after it has entered into the literary language, may retain its own elasticity and, what Bakhtin calls, 'other-languagedness' and thereby also deform the literary language itself (Ibid.). The incorporation of different social languages into the novel thus results in a unique dialogue of languages that affect each other. For instance, in HOD, and especially in the second part, the difference between the two languages may at some point be quite distinctly perceived, while at other times they coalesce, as it were, into one hybrid, so it

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becomes difficult to identify their respective boundaries. Furthermore, Marlow's intrinsic knowledge of the sailor jargon allows him to express lofty thoughts and sophisticated ideas in a casual and colloquial manner, which contributes even more to the blurring of the distinction between the two languages.

And finally, if each language of heteroglossia carries with it its own way of interpreting the world, as Bakhtin claims, then we can also speak of narrative distancing not only through formal devices such as frame narration, but also through different languages which the author chooses to incorporate into the text and through which he directly or indirectly expresses himself.

In this chapter I will therefore be examining how the two languages deployed by Marlow interact and structure his discourse in the second chapter, the chapter in which Marlow engages in a polemic with the audience.

The journey upriver in a steamboat is a small adventure story incorporated into the novella. As mentioned earlier, we have here all major constituents of an adventure: a destination (Kurtz) who gradually also acquires a status of a mystery, obstacles on the way (treacherous river, attack by the natives) and a clue/help how to get to the goal of the journey (the harlequin Russian). But this small adventure is not governed solely by the ultimate goal (Kurtz), the physical progression up the stream is also freighted with a host of different speculations and observations that express the ideological stance of the narrator. The ideological mass that constitutes this part of the story is fragmented into shorter statements (maxims) and larger portions that also recur in other parts of the story, but all of them tie into one integral whole and are oriented into one specific direction by the narrator's single accent. I will start by quoting the first paragraph that initiates the journey upriver and at the same time also states the main form-shaping idea.

Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once – somewhere – far away – in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare for yourself; but it came in the shape of unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resembled a peace. It was the

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stillness of an impalpable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect. I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it anymore; I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel; I had to discern, mostly by inspiration, the signs of hidden banks, I watched for sunken stones; I was learning to clap my teeth smartly before my heart flew out, when I shaved by fluke some infernal sly old snag that would have ripped the life out of the tin-pot steamboat and drowned all the pilgrims; I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the night for the next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality – the reality, I tell you – fades. The inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for – what is it? half-a-crown a tumble –

'Try to be civil, Marlow,' growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself (HOD: 59-60).

The paragraph is built on a simile by likening the movement *forward* with travel *back* in time.

As in the first chapter, we here also see how the idea, as a principle of representation, goes hand in glove with the form. The evolutionary perspective that the narrator offers us to see the journey through with is merged with the formal accents that all point to the silence of nature, predominance of animals over humans, etc. The rather gloomy tone of the narration is distrustful and timid, as one would be in the meeting with the unknown and potentially dangerous. Muteness of the wilderness and its constant monotonous presence are highlighted by the equally long and monotonous sentences that read like a jeremiad. The lamentation of being torn out of the world of humans and placed in a vacuum of silence as if compels the narrator to be verbally profuse, to name everything around him, to grow "verbal" roots among the silent language of nature that he cannot comprehend, cannot relate to in any meaningful way.

Although there is a single accent that organises the whole paragraph, we can observe an introduction of the second discourse that offers another, but fundamentally harmonious perspective on the more ideologically coloured representation. Thus, in the paragraph above we can see how Marlow's discourse starts off by exploring various forms of poetic imagery that treat the reality at a very abstract, metaphorical level and then quite abruptly it (the discourse) comes down to the mundane, practical, everyday reality of hard work. The shift from one discourse type to the other takes place smoothly but nevertheless rapidly. It is marked on both syntactical and semantic levels in the sentence: "I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it anymore; I had no time". This is a threshold at which the discourse, as it were, slips into a different form. After this sentence the use of semicolons escalates, which points to the representation of an oral speech type (skaz). The sentences that come after this threshold become accordingly shorter and the orientation of the

discourse as if leaves the written sphere with its abstractedness and appears as a voice that directly addresses the audience (which is what in fact happens toward the end of the paragraph when Marlow directly addresses his auditors). Towards the end of the paragraph we can see how the two discourse types merge to supplement each other. Thus, the more abstract, literary discourse that has introduced a vision of travelling “to the earliest beginnings of the world” is elucidated by the more skaz-oriented discourse that meticulously, from the inherent in it point of view, describes the hardships of navigating in the primordial state of nature.

Furthermore, the idea of coming back to the origins of the universe, expressed at the abstractly-figurative level in the beginning, toward the end of the passage is transferred by the straightforwardness of Marlow the seaman onto the literal level, where he now sees himself performing like a monkey, and his friends are doing tumbles on their respective tight-ropes. Thus, what the abstract literary discourse only alludes to, the more outspoken side of Marlow puts directly to use without so much ado and shyness. The abstractly expressed idea of travelling back to the roots of the humanity (which most probably stems from the scientifically founded hypothesis of Darwin), is made a practical, down-to-earth use of by Marlow who does not hesitate to examine himself and others in the light of this idea. Thus, while the abstractly expressed idea can give the sensation to the auditors that they are the ones who approach the wilderness from the height of their civilised nature, Marlow's sailorly merriness meanwhile casts a primordial look back at them, the look that renders them a mere link in the evolutionary chain, that is, it makes them look animal-like with only difference being that, instead of primordial trees they now perform on their respective tight-ropes.

This type of evolutionary perspective exerts a tremendous force on Marlow's vision and discourse throughout this part and till the end of the journey, the vision which makes him repudiate the “mask” of civilisation like clothes, material possessions, acquired principles, which he calls “pretty rags – rags that would fly off at the first good shake”. (HOD: 63). From this point on this perspective grows into a polemic with his auditors, at the base of which lies the assumption that not so many of them would be able to retain their civil appearance in the wilderness (for Marlow appears to believe them to hold that civilisation means clothes and all the things that help them make their lives comfortable – this view is very carefully and indirectly dismantled as the journey moves forward).

This is not the place to discuss in depth the essence and all the details of Marlow's argument, I will be considering them as the analysis progresses. The point I have been pursuing here is that Marlow

the sailor is able through the use of skaz (and the casual tone inherent in it) to express things that would sound inadequate or even inadmissible in the literary language of his epoch. So, while the auditors are being lulled into a comfortable myth of being at the vanguard of progress and civilisation, Marlow's direct address (as opposed to the elusiveness of the figurative discourse prior to this) makes them wake up and protest. Thus, what before was happening at the comfortable distance is now brought within the reach of the audience; the transition from high to low is achieved here by the shift in the discourse type that is marked by a crude familiarity of the lower social strata.¹¹

But the two discourse types, despite their marked differences, serve one and the same narrator and therefore also work in the same direction, that is, they do not contradict each other. While one introduces, the other summarises; and even though the summary achieved by the sailor jargon is semantically and syntactically far from the subtle motives of cultural and psychological alienation expressed in the first part of the quote, the two are inextricably bound with one another. The function the sailor jargon plays in this paragraph is to tease the audience, to swoop down on them in a surprising and unexpected way. This surprising aspect is possible due to the fundamentally oral orientation of skaz, which allows for a more flexible and quicker change in the direction of discourse because it is not subjected to the same, written rules of speech construction as are the longer sentences of the elevated, literary discourse that precedes it. The shorter sentences of skaz, for example, do not necessarily have to be logically or tone-wise consistent with one another as it is the case in the first part of the paragraph, which appears to be monolithically and rather monotonously consistent. Furthermore, it is also this flexibility and unceremoniousness of Marlow the sailor that enables him to express the pathos-charged and abstract idea in a familiar and down-to-earth manner. This is visible, for instance, in the last sentence of the paragraph before Marlow is interrupted by one of his auditors. Here Marlow translates the mysterious stillness of the wilderness (expressed at a distance and with utmost gravity earlier) into something palpable and directly affecting the audience. The transition from high to low or from the abstract level to the concrete is very noticeable, also for the audience who immediately react by protesting against Marlow's gross comparison. The two discourses appear thus to work together: if one abstractly hypothesises, the other, as it were, directly and crudely applies the idea.

¹¹ According to Bakhtin, skaz, more often than not, is introduced by the author for the sake of its socially distinct voice. Furthermore, skaz belongs to a storyteller who is not a literary person and therefore in most of the cases belongs to the lower social strata, i.e. the person who brings oral speech with him (Bakhtin 1997: 192).

The mediation between the two discourse types takes place throughout the second chapter with a changing distance between the two. For example, most of the descriptions of nature are rendered in the lofty and abstract style, whereas the practical, everyday matters are expressed through the more skaz-oriented sailor jargon. Marlow also deploys the sailor jargon to narrate the tall tales/yarns that are inserted in the story. We could say, however, that Marlow's narration is predominantly a harmonious combination of the two discourse types: Most of the story appears to be narrated in a semi-casual and fluent manner that characterises oral speech while at the same time Marlow is able to express sophisticated and abstract ideas couched in long sentences. But sometimes, as in the paragraph above, the difference between the two discourse types is quite distinctly felt both in their form and content. Interestingly, towards the end of the story, ensuing the unveiling of Kurtz, the sailor discourse is not made distinct use of by Marlow and we see therefore the predominance of a more sober, literary discourse in the conclusive pages. But the function of this mediation between the two discourse types also changes as Marlow's polemic with the audience develops. If above Marlow deploys the sailor discourse in order to provoke the auditors by its straightforward and unceremonious tone, later on in the story, as we shall see, Marlow will use it to divert the attention of his auditors away from the polemic.

The paragraph quoted above not only initiates the journey upriver, but it also marks the first, initial part of Marlow's polemic with his audience. Marlow does not really argue yet at this point, but rather appears to probe his audience. Marlow's tone is more playful than it is polemical and he does not insist so much on the purported likeness of him and his auditors with the primordial world. He is ready to laugh this comparison away, to drop it after the auditors react. However, as the story progresses the argument grows gradually from a light-hearted joke into a bitter polemic, with Marlow mustering all his eloquence to communicate persuasively his point. The progression of Marlow's polemic is both logical and chronological, in which the example of Kurtz serves as the ultimate testimony to support Marlow's words. From the first paragraph we quoted above and till the end of the journey the argument comes up three more times and forms, in my view, an ideological and polemical nucleus of the story. As mentioned earlier, the function played by the two discourse types changes as the argument intensifies and more examples, metaphors, maxims etc., are evoked.

After downplaying the aroused annoyance of his audience with some everyday trifles describing life on the steamer (and also introducing in passing a group of cannibals), Marlow again puts his ideological glasses on and embarks upon a long description of nature that ends with a polemical

eruption against his audience, this eruption is, however, abruptly diverted by shifting in the discourse type.

The part I refer to is three pages long and cannot be reproduced here in full, I will therefore quote only those paragraphs that trace the development of Marlow's argument up to the point where it breaks off and another discourse starts. The opening lines here strikingly resemble the ones of the first paragraph:

Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico. [...] The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. [...] We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. [...] The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand, because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories.

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. [...] They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend. And why not? The mind of the man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage – who can tell? – but truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder – the man knows, and can look on without a wink but he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff – with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags – rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row – is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced. Of course, a fool, what with sheer fright and fine sentiments, is always safe. Who's that grunting? You wonder I didn't go ashore for a howl and a dance? Well, no – I didn't. Fine sentiments, you say? Fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time. I had to mess about with white-lead and strips of woollen blanket helping to put bandages on those leaky steam-pipes – I tell you. I had to watch the steering and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook. There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man. And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. [...]

As in the first paragraph Marlow starts here by evoking the spirit of primordial nature, but the discourse and its tone become more specifically oriented towards the audience as the narration progresses. The image of nature as a distant, unknown planet is now made more familiar by introducing a human aspect into the description. The bond of kinship with what the narrator calls 'prehistoric man' is gradually used to direct the attention to the audience and their place in the link of the historical process. Having emphasised and rather categorically affirmed that there *is* a link between the prehistoric man and the white European, Marlow now carefully starts on a new path that from the periphery of the abstract idea moves slowly toward the heart of the matter, which provokes another, albeit more irritated response from the audience than the first time. In the course of Marlow's argument the audience is first persuaded to be able to comprehend the ugliness of the rudimentary form of humanity (Marlow insists: "a meaning in it which **you** – **you** so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend"), which Marlow ascribes to the natives who inhabit the banks of the river. To this rudimentary humanity Marlow quite abstractly opposes the inborn strength, which is again opposed to something acquired (principles, clothes, etc.). As a result of such juxtaposition of rudimentary and civilised with the subsequent repudiation of the civilised in form of acquired principles (repudiation that is actually at odds with Marlow's own evolutionary perspective that hinges precisely upon a slow accretion of cultural values, knowledge, etc.), the auditors emerge as the ugliness itself, ugliness that is wrapped in nice clothes and filled with noble but at the same time good-for-nothing principles and beliefs. Of course, the complete levelling of the auditors with the ones who leap on the shore is unreal and undesirable thing for Marlow to do, for it would mean that there is no difference at all and this is not what Marlow tries to say. Rather this virtual bringing of the two types of man close to one another serves for Marlow as an indirect rhetorical device to ask his auditors "are you men enough yourselves", "what makes *you* a man when clothes and principles are removed?" "how are *you* different from these men on the shore?", etc. Marlow draws here on the established representations of the natives as rudimentary souls and uses them to polemically enquire into what makes the white man different. Marlow quite laboriously asserts that there is a common biology between us and them,¹² but what makes difference is not something acquired but the deliberate belief, inborn strength, one's own true stuff, etc., and it is these qualities that Marlow polemically opposes to the audience. The importance of

¹² The amount of space allotted in the paragraph to the rather banal and simple assertion of common humanity and the extreme (even racist) language it is couched in, is in itself revealing of what kind of perception Marlow's auditors have of the indigenous population. One could also infer that Marlow's polemical tone is to a certain extent determined by the narrator's self-assumed role to revolutionise/change this perception of his audience.

these qualities is decisive, according to Marlow, in order not to succumb to the wilderness and to one's animal nature.

Marlow's idea of inborn strength and deliberate belief is presented in the light of Kurtz, and Marlow's auditors, like Kurtz, are put face to face with the prehistoric man. But the example of Kurtz's downfall (i.e. him going wild) has not yet been presented to the audience at this point, so Marlow consequently cannot assert the importance of these qualities persuasively enough here. Marlow is also tentative to argue with his audience openly here. He deploys third person pronouns that point to the general/abstract rather than to the personal/particular object of his argument (e.g. "the man knows"; "Let the fool gape and shudder", etc.). But despite these indirect allusions, Marlow's polemic with the auditors reaches its peak when Marlow's own discourse turns, as it were, against him and he as a result has to account now in what way he himself is better than others and whether his own talk is not just fine and empty sentiments: "Fine sentiments you say? Fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time". Interestingly, "I had no time" is exactly the same phrase that plays here the same function of the threshold as in the first paragraph, I cited above. But whereas earlier on this threshold marked a smooth and even transition from one discourse type to the other, here it is used as an escape, an escape from the discourse that has become too hot and too vulnerable and the further use of which may undermine the authority of Marlow's monologic narrative voice. After all, it is not Marlow who is the object of his description but people around him. Furthermore, Marlow himself does not embody the idea that structures his narrative, it is Kurtz who does and therefore Marlow cannot argue directly but only through Kurtz. Accordingly, the theme of inner strength is polemically evoked again a few pages later, but this time Marlow uses it in conjunction with the unveiling of Kurtz's degradation and therefore manages to achieve a greater effect on his audience than he does it here.¹³ But at this point in the narrative Marlow is anxious to manoeuvre away from the hot issue that threatens to undermine his narrative authority. This 'manoeuvring away' is achieved by a shift in the discourse type that also entails an introduction of another genre. Marlow's alter ego, the yarn-spinner, takes over and starts as before by describing his hard working conditions, but then suddenly he sets his eyes on a savage fireman who finds himself bewitched by the vertical boiler (the quote above continues):

¹³ The role of Kurtz as an element of suspense in the narrative is quite evident in this avoidance of Marlow to unveil Kurtz's mystery at this point. Technically, if Marlow did it here then it would be against the rules of the genre of adventure story - the mystery cannot be unveiled before it is physically arrived at. However, Marlow does allow himself a foreshadowing of Kurtz's downfall, but he does it almost immediately before they reach him.

He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in the parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam-gauge and at the water-gauge with an evident effort of intrepidity – and he had filed teeth too, the poor devil, and the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on each of his cheeks. He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed; and what he knew was this – that should the water in that transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry through the greatness of his thirst, and take a terrible vengeance. So he sweated and fired up and watched the glass fearfully (with an impromptu charm, made of rags, tied to his arm, and a piece of polished bone, as big as a watch, stuck flatways through his lower lip), [the shift again] while the wooded banks slipped past us slowly, the short noise was left behind, the interminable miles of silence – and we crept on, towards Kurtz. But the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it, and thus neither the fireman nor I had any time to peer into our creepy thoughts.

In this description of the fireman the use of sailor jargon concurs with the genre of a yarn or a tall tale with inherent in it hyperbolisation of the described object. This is by far the longest and most sustained deployment of this genre in the whole story. Another, very similar to this one but significantly shorter instance can be found in the first chapter, where Marlow describes an old hippo that “had the bad habit of getting out on the bank and roaming at night over station grounds” (p. 52). But whereas in the first chapter this inserted story was joined together with the form-shaping idea of ridiculing the pilgrims (who would uselessly fire at the animal), the story here is connected with a more detailed representation of the natives, but at the same time also acts as a “pacifier” that diverts the attention away from the hot issue. Accordingly, by the end of the paragraph the accent is moved far away from the preceding argument with the audience and the context for a completely new paragraph is thereby prepared.

So, if in the beginning of the journey Marlow was focusing on the savage aspect of the wilderness, in this paragraph and the ones to come, Marlow directs his view at the people of the wilderness who exhibit the raw humanity, humanity “stripped of its cloak of time”. The familiarity of close contact ingrained in the skaz-oriented, sailor discourse and the extravagant excessiveness of the yarn genre, have assisted in bringing the fireman right in front of Marlow's eyes, as opposed to the abstract and undistinguished black mass that before was leaping and spinning on the shore. And not only the fireman now resembles something familiar (a dog), but this time Marlow also knows what is in his head. Both the image of the fireman and his thoughts are exaggerated in keeping with the lower

strata discourse and genres of expression. An image of a dressed dog might stem, for example, from a travelling fun fair or other types of street entertainment (types of amusement that are popular among the lower social strata). But the fashion of dressing dogs was also, to my knowledge, very common among aristocracy of the 19th century (i.e. high culture image). In any case, whether it is a circus performance or an aristocrat walking his dog in the street that conjured up an association in Marlow's mind, he and his auditors find it amusing (we hear that Marlow's auditors had all done service in merchant fleet and therefore must be familiar with the lower strata genres and their images). Also the thoughts that, according to Marlow, govern the actions of the fireman are similar to those that govern the actions of a trained dog that performs basic operations without really understanding why or if understanding then in the dog/savage-like way.

But since the representations of the natives are inextricably bound with Marlow's polemic with the audience, I would like therefore to pause here and analyse a bit deeper the principle behind Marlow's representation of the natives and how it is, for example, different from that of the pilgrims. We have seen that Marlow deploys sailor discourse with its crude familiarity in order to parodically describe both the pilgrims and the natives. In this connection I would like to draw on Bakhtin's ideas on the process of carnivalisation of literature and the particular carnival laughter.

According to Bakhtin carnivalisation of literature has taken place over thousands of years, the process that has resulted in a gradual familiarization of man in the world and the subsequent destruction of the epic distance. This familiarization has also "introduced the logic of misalliances and profanatory debasings [and] finally, it exercised a powerful transforming influence on the very verbal style of literature" (Bakhtin 1997: 124). Carnival as a ritual celebrates "life turned inside out" or "the life drawn out of its *usual* rut" (Ibid. original italics). The celebration of this shift between the usual life and its carnivalistic double is captured in the primary carnivalistic act of "the *mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*" (Ibid.; original italics). The ritual of crowning and decrowning is always ambivalent because in the act of crowning there is already from the start present the idea of decrowning. Thus, he who is crowned is the opposite of a real king (e.g. a slave or a fool). But the ceremony of decrowning, Bakhtin stresses, never means a complete negation or destruction of the object. Rather, the primary goal with this ritual is to express the particular "carnival pathos of shifts and renewals, the image of constructive death" (Ibid. 125). Parodic laughter, according to Bakhtin, is also carnivalistic in its essence because its purpose is to create 'a decrowning double'. But carnivalistic parody was originally connected to the logic of carnival and therefore did not mean a "naked rejection of the parodied object" (Ibid. 127). Bakhtin

also observes that in modern times 'narrowly formal literary parody' has almost entirely lost its connection with the carnival sense of the world, with its ambivalent ritual of death and renewal (Ibid. 128).

In the first chapter of HOD and particularly in the depiction of the colonial settings, we can see a sustained deployment of parody and this parody is not of an ambivalent, carnivalistic type as Bakhtin describes it. Rather, the corruption and futility of the colonial mission are parodied in a very hard-edged mode of negation that does not allow for any possibility of 'renewal'. Likewise, Marlow's wholesale damnation of the Belgian colonial enterprise completely reifies the images of the colonisers and their servants. The parodic descriptions that we find in the second and third chapters are, on the other hand, very few and they are of secondary importance to the construction of the plot and its form-shaping idea (whereas they are central in the first part). As we have already seen, Marlow's polemical tone derives from his somewhat controversial (at least in the minds of his auditors) assertion of the existence of common nature between the two types of man, the nature that hides under the acquired paraphernalia like clothes and principles. Marlow thus needs this fundamental humanity of the savages in order to sustain his polemic with the auditors, the polemic that acquires more magnitude as the unveiling of Kurtz approaches. But how does this (i.e. Marlow's polemic) affect Marlow's representation of the natives? It is my contention that Marlow's parodic representation of the natives is different from that of the pilgrims in one very important respect. The parody of the pilgrims is uncompromisingly straight and reifying throughout the story, whereas Marlow's parody of the natives is marked by approach/avoidance or what Bakhtin describes as the act of crowning/decrowning, parody that does not strive for a complete negation of the parodied object. But before I assess this contention, I would like first to comment on the possibilities of seeing HOD along carnivalistic lines.

To be sure, it may seem far-fetched to look for strong carnivalesque features in the part describing the journey upriver or in the other parts of the story, although Bakhtin does specify that places like town squares and decks of ships are conventional locations in literature (and in real life) for a carnival-action to take place (Bakhtin 1997:128). But in HOD, which is set in the colonial location, the people are not brought together across social differences in the name of free and familiar spirit of carnival, but rather quite on the contrary are separated by an apartheid-like segregation. However, the representation of the natives onboard the steamer *is* marked by a more familiar

manner as well as by a more detailed depiction than anywhere else in the story. Furthermore, the colonial location itself may also be seen as an estrangement device similar to the ambience of a carnival period, during which life is “drawn out of its *usual* rut”, “life turned inside out”, “the reverse side of the world” (Ibid. 122; italics in the original). Similarly, Marlow on many occasions in the story is trying to convey to his auditors the dream-like sensation of being in the wilderness, the fantasticality of it. Thus, finding a dull book on nautical theory would give Marlow “a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real” (HOD: 65). Along the same carnivalistic, inside-out aspects of the colonial context we can, for example, mention Marlow’s trying to imagine the cannibals going at the white members of the crew or Marlow suggesting that he and his friends are circus-like animals performing on their respective tight-ropes. The immensity of surrounding nature is also used by Marlow to belittle the aspects of technological progress – “Trees, trees, millions of trees [...]; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steam boat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico” (HOD:61). Marlow explains these inside-out thought experiments as “a touch of fantastic vanity which fitted well with the dream-sensation that pervaded all my days at that time” (HOD: 71). But Marlow is rather cautious when introducing these mild carnivalistic debasings of the common sense. This cautiousness can, for example, be also seen in the deployed narrative distancing that attempts to build different layers between the author and the discourse of his characters. To this we can also add Marlow’s indirect and abstract way of structuring his polemic with the audience. All this might be said to point to the quite uncarnivalistic rigidity of Marlow’s auditors as well as of his epoch that does not allow for direct and extreme forms of subversion of the established order.¹⁴ So, while the colonial context in HOD does allow Marlow to present things European (i.e. culture, people, etc.) in a different light, Marlow’s imperial dialogising background at the same time also seems to exert a number of restraints on what and how Marlow narrates the story.

In the course of my digression I have commented on the possibilities of viewing HOD along the carnivalistic lines as defined by Bakhtin. But coming back to my contention that Marlow’s parodic representations of the natives are different from those of the pilgrims, I would like to suggest to re-view the paragraph describing the fireman along the lines of the primary carnivalistic act of crowning/decrowning, presented by us above. As we saw above, the carnivalistic parody is used to create a ‘decrowning double’ of the parodied object. Marlow’s description starts accordingly by setting up an object and its parodic double: “I had to look after the savage who was a fireman”. In

¹⁴ The charges against Oscar Wilde and his brutal imprisonment in 1895 come to my mind here.

the act of crowning, Bakhtin writes, there already glimmers an element of decrowning – the *savage* fireman is already expected to behave not as an ordinary fireman. Marlow's description of the fireman proceeds right to the end by switching between crowning and decrowning: "He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler" (praise/belittlement); "to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog [...]"; "A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam-gauge [...] with an evident effort of intrepidity"; "He ought to have been clapping his hands [...] instead of which he was hard at work [...]"; "He was useful because he had been instructed; and what he knew was this – [...]"(see the rest of the quote above).

In each sentence we can find an object of description and its parodic double (i.e. praise/abuse). This movement to and away from the object described, structurally looks very different from the more one-sided parodies of the pilgrims in the first chapter. The ambivalence of the image here lies precisely in the fact that the savage cannot be a fireman, just as a fool cannot be a real king – a fool glimmers already through regal vestments, just as the savageness glimmers through the way the savage enacts a fireman (i.e. by being enthralled by the thirsty devil inside the boiler). The ambivalence inherent in the structure of both images (i.e. Carnivalistic and Marlowian) performs, however, different functions in their respective contexts. Thus, if during the carnival the act of crowning/decrowning serves to highlight the 'joyful relativity' of the mundane order of things, in HOD the same act serves to parody solely the savageness of the fireman. If during the carnival the mock crowning of a fool is used to point beyond the fool himself (i.e. to the potential reverse order of king also being a fool), in HOD the crowning of the savage as a fireman is used to highlight his savageness and nothing else. Thus, we could say that Marlow's crowning/decrowning portrayal of the fireman is based on a fundamentally negative and therefore uncarnivalistic premise, the premise that has at its core a reified (prejudiced) image of what it is to be a savage.

So, how is Marlow's parodic representation of the natives different from that of the pilgrims, if Marlow's element of crowning/affirmation when describing the natives is based on the essentially reified, parodic image? The problem is that Marlow's complete decrowning of the natives is fundamentally at odds with his own project of asserting the bond of common humanity (i.e. the form-shaping idea) that underpins his polemic with the audience. So, no matter how he portrays the fireman, the helmsman or the cannibals, he is forced to rehabilitate their status as human beings in order that his moral-didactic appeal to the audience should work. Therefore, the element of decrowning or negation that is inherent in the colonial images of the natives, as in the one we saw above, has to be crowned or affirmed in an artificial way. Thus, Marlow's closing lines in the

paragraph above do the palpably artificial rehabilitation of the fireman, who from the savage plan is quite abruptly and curtly transferred to being a fellow human:

“But the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it, and thus neither the fireman nor I had any time to peer into our creepy thoughts”.

What Marlow was ridiculing a minute earlier (i.e. the pagan belief of the fireman that a devil lives in the engine), he now semi-seriously affirms with his own words, the act which softens his ridicule quite substantially. Then comes the gentlemanly placement of the fireman as the first in the neither/nor construction, and in the end Marlow endows him with the ability to think just like himself.¹⁵ Thus, in this last sentence we can see an urgent rehabilitation/ “unparodisation” of the fireman that is made visible by the enormous contrast between “a dog in the parody of breeches” in the beginning of the paragraph and these conclusive lines. It is as if, and I believe it is the case, Marlow becomes aware of the undermining implications of this reifying, cliché-ridden representation for his own subversion of the accepted norms among the audience and he therefore hastens to tone it down. Thus, a peculiar picture appears when we look at the trajectory of Marlow's discourse that has made quite a curve from the open polemic with his audience to the escape from it via the sailorly tall tale, the use of which has ushered him into the realm of clichés that risk to thwart the base of his own argument. The dialogism of Marlow's discourse is quite obvious in this bouncing off now one theme, now another, the shifts that are followed by change in the discourse and genre type.

The irony of Marlow's switching between the different discourse types lies in the fact that even though they are governed by one and the same consciousness, the worldview inherent in each of these two discourse types works, if taken to the extreme, in the opposite directions. Thus, Marlow who, on the one hand, is at pains to affirm the common bond with the natives and thereby ‘educate’ or polemically tease his audience, is forced, in the course of his argument, to switch to another discourse that appears to work against his more ‘noble’ goals. But in reality the conflict between the two discourse types here is not a conflict of ideology as such (for both of them are fundamentally hinged upon one and the same understanding of the native as inferior), but is rather a conflict of style and genre of representation. The point to be made here is that the complete reification of the image in the sailorly jargon is not conducive for further development of Marlow's polemic with his

¹⁵ Besides Marlow also confesses to have “creepy thoughts” and thereby discloses the process of his own imagination deployed when describing the fireman.

audience. To portray the native as a dog is to say it all in one phrase and to say it crudely. And it is this crude and abortive impact of the sailor jargon on the subsequent development of a more sophisticated and humane representation (inherent in the literary/enlightened discourse) that makes Marlow to moderate the former. But the two appear to belong within the same realm of cultural ethnocentrism and its inherent cultural superiority. Therefore the difference between the two is that of a degree of representation rather than of the ideological essence.

So, quite characteristically of Marlow's single accent, the two discourses are welded into one towards the end of the paragraph (see above). By now the polemic is left behind and the fireman is partly rehabilitated. The story can continue, the continuation that is also marked by a new paragraph.

I have indicated above that the switch to the sailor jargon is deployed as a rhetorical device that helps to divert the attention from the argument that Marlow could not or did not want to sustain for compositional reasons (i.e. too early foreshadowing of Kurtz). But apart from being a rhetorical device the switch is performed in a very natural way as if the narrator is completely confident that this quick story will 'work'. According to Bakhtin, the choice of a particular genre determines the utterance and its formal aspects from the very first sentence and "guides us in the process of our speaking" (Duff 2000: 92). Furthermore, the genre and the style of its expression are also determined "by the nature and degree of personal proximity of the addressee to the speaker in various familiar speech genres [...]" (Ibid.). Similarly, from the very first sentence presenting the savage fireman, Marlow's description of him as if slips into a well-greased groove of the genre. The story is told smoothly, in one breath, as it were. Marlow appears to know in advance the pattern of how the story should unfold. The style of the narration is also marked by familiar contact Marlow has with his audience, which is visible in certain candour and cynicism of Marlow's description.¹⁶ However, it seems as if Marlow's rather gross familiarity and equally gross description of the fireman is not only conditioned by the genre at hand, but also by Marlow's urgent desire to move away from the preceding argument and its overheated polemical discourse that was beginning to jeopardise the direct signifying power of his narrative voice. The auditors therefore should be calmed down and appeased before Marlow can get on with the story. This appeasement can be said to be achieved through deployment of a popular, comic genre.

¹⁶ Bakhtin stresses that in familiar speech constraints and conventions fall away and the speech therefore "can take a special unofficial, volitional approach to reality" (Ibid. 93)

The fireman story with its colonial, prejudiced images of the natives does indeed seem to be familiar and natural not only to the auditors but also to Marlow himself, if we judge by the fluency of Marlow's narration and not the least by the absence of any real need to subsequently rehabilitate the fireman figure.¹⁷ Marlow's half-hearted rehabilitation of the fireman is clearly disproportionate to the parody of him and is only matched by the fireman's marginal role in the story (the fireman is mentioned very shortly only one more time in the story). This is, however, different with Marlow's helmsman who occupies more central role in Marlow's polemic. As we saw above, Marlow tends to deploy the familiar style of sailor jargon when describing the natives, while he tends to do the affirmation of their humanity in the more serious, literary discourse. Marlow's representation of the helmsman follows the same pattern as with the fireman, although this time the affirmation is more elaborately asserted in harmony with Marlow's polemic that reaches its culmination in this part of the story. So, when introducing the helmsman Marlow has the following to say:

"He was the most unstable kind of fool I had ever seen. He steered with no end of a swagger while you were by; but if he lost sight of you, he became instantly the prey of an abject funk, and he would let that cripple of a steamboat get the upper hand of him in a minute" (HOD: 75).

Marlow leaves the description at that and immediately embarks upon recounting the story of how Kurtz's tribe attacked the steamer, during this attack the helmsman dies. The death of the helmsman provokes Marlow's foreshadowing disclosure of Kurtz's degeneration. In this way the two, Kurtz and the helmsman, get connected. After the death of the helmsman, Marlow "resurrects" him for the sole purpose of expounding his moral lecture. The curious thing in Marlow's rehabilitation of the helmsman is not only the palpable shift in the description from the extremely parodic to the pathos-charged seriousness (as it was partly also the case with the fireman), but also, as something new, the apologetic tone with which Marlow does this rehabilitation.

No; I can't forget him[Kurtz], though I am not prepared to affirm the fellow[Kurtz] was exactly worth the life we lost in getting him. I missed my late helmsman awfully, - I missed him even while his body was still lying in the pilot-house. Perhaps you will think it passing strange this regret for a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara. Well, don't you see, he had done something, he had steered; for months I had him at my back - a help - an instrument. It was a kind of partnership. He steered for me - I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies,

¹⁷ Many postcolonial critics have stressed that this type of prejudiced images of the natives were the only ones available to Marlow and consequently to Conrad (e.g. Benitta Parry's "The Moment and Afterlife in Heart of Darkness" in (Kaplan et al.: 2005)). Furthermore, according to Robert Humpson, Conrad did rely on other popular, secondary sources for the description of Congo while writing HOD (Humpson 1990: 20).

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and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken. And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory – like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment (HOD: 84-5)

With this description Marlow is bringing his argument about the common nature to the end. The humanity of the helmsman in this description gets very laboriously affirmed by Marlow's statement that the helmsman's life was more worth than the life of Kurtz. However, this statement, peculiarly enough, engenders an apologetic tone: Marlow feels now obliged to explicate the conditions under which the life of the native is equal or even of more value than that of a white man. But the very conditions which Marlow gives, together with the apologetic tone, work, however, not to affirm but to directly undermine the very humanity he wants to ascribe to the helmsman. Furthermore, Marlow's discourse as if recoils from its original track (originally embarked upon to affirm helmsman's humanity) and ends up by equalling the helmsman with an 'instrument'. Thus, the initial sentence "I missed my late helmsman awfully [...]" begins to sound hollow and tendentious in the light of what comes after it. As a result of this the very worth of helmsman's humanity gets precariously squeezed between, on the one hand, the insanity of Kurtz (unveiled just before this passage and with whom Marlow compares him) and the pure instrumentalist view of his (helmsman's) life, on the other. From this follows that what Marlow needs, after all, is not the helmsman's humanity as such but the 'instrumental' role his humanity plays in his, Marlow's argument. For Marlow he is thus truly "a help – an instrument".

The fact that Marlow's discourse acquires an apologetic/justifying tone when endorsing even a simply *instrumental* worth of the helmsman's life, and the fact that Marlow's tone is more than confident when he tells the story about "a dog in the parody of breeches", may give us a hint as to against what kind of wilderness of cultural prejudice the story is narrated. In other words, if Marlow's apology is indicative of the auditors' preconceived images of the natives, Marlow's instrumental view of the helmsman appears to be indicative of his own ideas.

Marlow's use of cannibals plays exactly the same role as the fireman and the helmsman in the course of Marlow's polemic. I have already dealt in the first chapter of the analysis with Marlow's implicit allusion to the European cannibalism by using the example with the cannibals. Marlow's use of the cannibals' extraordinary restraint here is also a way to put them, again polemically, higher than Kurtz who does not have any restraint. But just as in the case with the helmsman's human worth, this restraint is artificially created for polemical purposes and therefore not to be trusted. When commenting on the inexplicable nature of this restraint that, in Marlow's view,

baffles all probability, he inadvertently and unselfconsciously discloses not only his monologic position as a narrator but also as a polemical manipulator of his descriptions (the two go, in fact, together).

Restraint! I would just as soon have expected restraint from a hyena prowling amongst the corpses of a battlefield. But there was the fact facing me – the fact dazzling, to be seen, like the foam on the depths of the sea, like a ripple on an unfathomable enigma, a mystery greater – when I thought of it – than the curious, inexplicable note of desperate grief in this savage clamour that had swept by us on the river-bank, behind the blind whiteness of the fog (HOD: 71-2).

Some contextual explanation is necessary here before I proceed with the example. On their approaching to Kurtz' station, Marlow and the pilgrims anchor the steamer in the middle of the river because of a very thick fog. When the fog lifts for a short time and the boat becomes visible, Marlow and his crew hear a “complaining clamour, modulated in savage discords [...]” (HOD: 68). While the crew is waiting for the fog to disappear, Marlow observes the cannibals and ponders over their restraint to tackle hunger. The quote above describes his concluding thoughts on the subject. The cited passage also illustrates how Marlow prepares the context for the following story (i.e. Kurtz's lack of restraint and the idolatrous devotion of the natives (expressed here as the “desperate grief” in their “clamour”). The restraint of the cannibals is very specifically plotted here and not mentioned anymore in the story. The meaning of the restraint points, as mentioned, in two directions – towards the Franklin expedition and towards Kurtz, but both being a part of Marlow's polemic. The “complaining clamour” of the savages is, however, just another stroke of the narrator's monologic discourse. If before we saw that Marlow and others could not tell what the yelling on the shore meant (“What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage – who can tell?” see quote on p.37), now he knows exactly what this is the expression of. What before was an indistinct ‘yell’ has now been transformed into a ‘clamour’, which suggests, according to Oxford concise dictionary, undertones of protest and complain. This is not, however, a mere instance of narrative foreshadowing that Marlow is able to deploy as a result of him telling the story in retrospect. Marlow explicitly states that he knew from the start that it was the expression of grief and desolation on the natives' part. He, in fact, delivers one of his mocking blows at the pilgrims in the light of his more sensitive ‘reading’ of this savage cry.

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The glimpse of the steamboat had for some reason filled those savages with unrestrained grief. The danger, if any, I expounded, was from our proximity to a great human passion let loose. Even extreme grief may ultimately vent itself in violence – but more generally takes the form of apathy....

'You should have seen the pilgrims stare! They had no heart to grin, or even revile me; but I believe they thought me gone mad – with fright, maybe (HOD:73)

Marlow's description and insistence on the mournful nature of the savage cry is thus in keeping both with his subsequent representation of Kurtz as a self-posed deity and the image of the prehistoric man who, because of his rudimentary nature, is gullible enough to believe Kurtz to be God. In this light of Marlow's monologic and manipulatory narration, the "unfathomable enigma" of the cannibals' restraint emerges as yet another carefully set-up rhetorical device, devised to polemically tease his audience rather than to actually affirm the human strength and restraint of the cannibals.

To sum up. The discourse in the second chapter is structured around Marlow's polemic with his audience. Marlow is telling the story in two distinct discourse types that are subordinated to one speech consciousness and therefore do not contradict each other in any significant way. However, the reifying mode of representation that is inherent in the sailor jargon and in its style of expression, is not always conducive for the development of Marlow's polemic that strives to introduce another, more human view of the natives. The demeaning parody inherent in the sailor jargon and the crude way of its representation has therefore to be artificially, if only partly, rehabilitated or toned down in order to allow for Marlow's moral message to sound forth. This implies that the sailor jargon and the genre of tall tale/yarn is not sufficient to convey the more subtle details of Marlow's argument. However, despite the generic and stylistic differences between the two discourse types, the distance between them does not always feel big and contradictory by the narrator, hence Marlow's consequent and sustained deployment and mergence of the two. The legitimacy and noncontradictoriness in combining the two is also highlighted by the rather humble and apologetic forms of rehabilitation of the parodic representations of the natives. We can thus, with some justice, say that the representations done through the sailor jargon appear to be common and natural, whereas any attempt to rehabilitate them engenders polemical, but also apologetic tones in the narrative.

The facets of Marlow's polemic reflect in different ways and build up to the final unveiling of Kurtz. Thus, the figure of Kurtz, stripped off its layers of civilisation, is in harmony with Marlow's

evolutionary perspective on the wilderness and his insistence on common human nature ('Truth stripped of its cloak of time') as well as his polemical repudiation of the things acquired. The humanity of the helmsman and the restraint of the cannibals are also polemically opposed to the loss of these not only by Kurtz but also by Franklin's crew. But these affirmations of the natives' human features are, on the one hand, the instantiations of the narrator's manipulatory and hence artificial plotting, and, on the other hand, they are undermined at the level of representations themselves (e.g. by the crude familiarity of the sailor discourse, Marlow's apologetic tone, the instrumental view of the humanity, etc.)

The second chapter thus embodies the novella's ideological nucleus (the polemic) and its ideological climax (the downfall of Kurtz). But the climax of the adventure itself (finding Kurtz) is suspended until the third and the last chapter. Here Marlow sums up the loose ends of his polemic, exposes Kurtz' final judgement upon himself ('Horror, horror'), which also serves to mark Marlow's own *Bildung* as a person and at the same time consummates his moral exploit from the wilderness. However, what connects the second and the third chapter and allows the story to be told to the end is the harlequin Russian whom Marlow meets after having reached Kurtz' station. In the following I would like to discuss this interesting figure and its function in the narrative.

The Harlequin

"A fool introduced by the author for purposes of "making strange" the world of conventional pathos may himself, as a fool, be the object of the author's scorn" (Bakhtin 2001: 404)

The harlequin in HOD is a Russian youth who has run away from home and who, after having been employed as a seaman on both Russian and English ships, sets out on a journey to the heart of the continent where he finds Kurtz and later Marlow.

According to Bakhtin, in the course of novel's development, the image of a fool has played a crucial role in destroying the hierarchical image of man and his discourse of high pathos that we find in classical drama and epic (Ibid. 405). Bakhtin asserts that there have been numerous popular variations on a fool figure in the history of literature (e.g. Baffon, Maccus, Pulcinello, Harlequin, etc.), but in literature all these figures played three distinct roles. Bakhtin chooses the image of a **merry rogue** to define the category of *gay deception*. In the mouth of a merry rogue the pathos inherent in any of the languages (generally that of nobility) is exposed as a lie through ironic

reproduction and distancing. In this process the falsity of high pathos is revealed, brought down low and exposed as just one language among others (we are here at the heart of the heteroglot nature of language and its relativity) (Ibid. 402). The second category is represented by **a fool** who through his naiveté and incomprehension fails (polemically) to understand this same lofty pathos or the established conventions of the society. Between the rogue and the fool we find the third category of **a clown** who combines the two in his figure. The clown is “a rogue who dons the mask of a fool in order to motivate distortions and shuffling of languages and labels, thus unmasking them by not understanding them” (Ibid. 404-5). These different figures constitute, as mentioned earlier, an important part of what Bakhtin calls the process of “carnivalisation of literature” – the influence of folk culture of laughter on the development of the novel of the second stylistic line. Carnivalised literature becomes aware of the inadequacy and naiveté of one discourse, one pathos and inherent in it one view of the world. This awareness has formed the necessary fundament for the heteroglot perception of the world in literature (e.g. Don Quixote).

I will not pursue further Bakhtin's discussion of these popular figures and their importance at the different stages of novel's development. I will rather try to highlight the figure of the harlequin and its function in the narrative in the light of Bakhtin's ideas.

Marlow's harlequin is a complex figure, for he is not only an embodiment of incomprehension and naiveté, but, as I will argue, is also a figure that points to the autobiographical material that weaves into the narrative fabric of HOD.

“We have been attacked,” screamed the manager. “I know – I know. It's alright,” yelled back the other, as cheerful as you please. “Come along. It's alright. I am glad” (HOD: 87).

What makes the harlequin is not only his be-patched clothes of different colours and extravagant appearance, but more so his attitude towards people and reality. The naiveté and unconditional trust that shine through this character are also reflected in the way he speaks and acts. “Come along. It's alright. I am glad” are the most positive, most welcoming and most philanthropic sentences in the whole story, words that stand in stark contrast to Marlow's own gloomy, sceptical and cynical worldview. The harlequin's cheerful and down to earth attitude stands also in stark contrast to the rigid and phobic sensibilities of the pilgrims. Yet another contrast to the pilgrims and the whole ivory enterprise is the harlequin's material disinterestedness and his fundamentally equal relationship with the natives whom he calls simple people as himself. Harlequin's designation of the

natives as “simple” is very different from Marlow’s ideologically-laden “simple”. Whereas the former refers more to a simple way of living (as that of a farmer or a hunter, for instance), the latter, meanwhile, is bent on emphasising the natives’ greater proximity to the originally animal nature of human beings.

Although the harlequin cannot altogether avoid the “currency” of the day (i.e. ivory), but his way of getting it is different from that of Kurtz and the rest of Europeans – he exchanges it in return for game he shoots for villagers. Although we are not offered so many examples of the harlequin’s communication with the natives, those few glimpses of indirect contact that we have are all imbued with particular humanness that is revealingly absent in other parts of the story. According to Bakhtin every more or less significant character in the novel has its own zone, in which his speech, as it were, interacts with and affects that of the narrator/author (Bakhtin 2002: 320). Thus, when Marlow transmits the speech of the harlequin he is also, indirectly, forced to transmit its particularities, as for instance his fundamentally more humane view of the natives. The most prominent example of this occurs when the harlequin recounts an incident with Kurtz’s African mistress that nearly cost the harlequin his life. This episode is preceded by Marlow’s own description of the woman. The objectified image of the woman in Marlow’s description (the image that is not so much different from other of Marlow’s descriptions of the natives we saw in the second chapter), stands in stark contrast to the harlequin’s domestic and unmistakably humane picture of her. First Marlow:

She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. [...] Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve.

And the harlequin’s:

“I had been risking my life every day for the last fortnight to keep her out of the house. She got in one day and kicked up a row about those miserable rags I picked up in the storeroom to mend my clothes with. I wasn’t decent. At least it must have been that, for she talked like a fury to Kurtz for an hour, pointing at me now and then. I don’t understand the dialect of this tribe. [...] (HOD: 99-100)

The curious thing here is that Marlow, who does not speak the dialect or (to use a less discriminating word) the language of the tribe and who has not known the woman for as long as the harlequin has, appears to be more confident in knowing what her facial expression displays than the

harlequin who is tentative in his own judgment even after hearing her speak for an hour. And, of course, the different modes of representation speak for themselves here. For Marlow she is a mute object of description, whereas for the harlequin she is a subject who has her own voice and attitude (even if he may not be pleased with her presence).

In the harlequin's zone, the image of the wilderness likewise acquires more natural features. From him we hear of the villagers and their chief with whom he has made a deal to exchange game for ivory (an instance of social organisation). The harlequin escapes (ironically enough from the pilgrims) in a canoe paddled by his friends from among the natives. Upon the whole, in this part of the story there glimmers human existence, meaningful communication, feelings and possible ways of living and being human in what otherwise for Marlow is an impenetrable darkness and people who leap and shout some uncouth, inarticulate sounds.

The representation of the harlequin character and his discourse carries with it his particular vision of the world. Of course, Marlow uses the harlequin's naiveté for his own purposes but he cannot, at the same time, avoid to represent other aspects of this naiveté that do not harmoniously fit into Marlow's monologic point of view. Thus, while Marlow puts the harlequin's child-like naiveté and material disinterestedness as a foil to Kurtz' utter greed and evil nature, he cannot prevent this naiveté from casting a whole different light on the wilderness and its inhabitants. Hence the harlequin's simplistic, ideologically unbiased vision not only contrasts the evilness of Kurtz but also undoes, if only for a short moment and insignificantly, Marlow's own rather ideologised/dehumanised¹⁸ picture of the natives and their surroundings. Although it is not very plausible that the harlequin is intended to contrast Marlow's own representation and thereby contradict his monologic point of view, the question remains, however, whether this is just an insignificant and unconscious slippage on the narrator's behalf or Marlow tries to indirectly express through the harlequin what he is not able to say in his own, direct discourse. I will try to answer this question in the course of this chapter.

It should by now be clear that the harlequin Russian performs, out of the three functions defined by Bakhtin, that of a fool who through his naïve incomprehension of the imperial pathos of Kurtz,

¹⁸ Marlow's description of the natives is more often than not done along the lines of humanity vs. inhumanity, which is an abstractly ideological way of seeing people, the view that does not take into account small, everyday things that above all exhibit our humanity (hence Achebe's appeal, in his article on Conrad, to see Africa "as a continent of people – not angels, but not rudimentary souls either [...]") (Achebe 1988: 12).

polemically¹⁹ exposes the potential evil and greed inherent in the colonial and civilising missions. The harlequin's incomprehension, combined with his material disinterestedness are contrasted to Kurtz' lofty ideas and material aspirations that, as mentioned earlier, undermine each other. But the harlequin is not a simple, one-sided character that is used to fill the vacant slot as somebody's foil in the narrative's mosaic. The representation of the harlequin is markedly different from all other characters in the story. In conventional literary criticism we would call the harlequin a round character, that is, a character whom it is "as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and [who] like real persons, is capable of surprising us" (Abrams 1999: 33). Bakhtin approaches the depiction of characters from another, more philosophical angle. He asks thus whether a character is coincident or non-coincident with himself as a man (Bakhtin 1997: 59). The one-dimensional, flat type of character is coincident with his representation and is therefore not represented as a man (i.e. human being) but as a thing. Whereas the character that does not coincide with himself is represented dialogically, that is, as a living and developing human being who is gradually and unfinalisingly represented in the course of the story (i.e. such character never totally coincides with himself, and even when the story is brought to the end, there is still future, unfinalized potential in him/her).

The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a *dialogic* penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself (Ibid; italics in the original)

All the characters in HOD apart from Marlow, the hidden narrator and harlequin, are finalised and cannot break out of their objectified image. The pilgrims and the manager coincide with their image as greedy and hollow men since Marlow's arrival at the central station and until the end of the journey. The manager's self-seeking and self-promoting indictment of Kurtz at the end of the journey consummates likewise his moral insensitivity and hollowness, which Marlow ascribed to him in the beginning. The pilgrims also remain as one mute and indistinct mass. We can, however, regard Kurtz' self-judgment (Horror, horror!) as a moral sum-up of his deeds, a recognition that deserves Marlow's relative respect towards him: "He had summed up – he had judged. "The horror!" He was a remarkable man". But Kurtz' sum-up is only a tiny speck of life on his otherwise

¹⁹ Bakhtin's use of this word should be seen in relation to incomprehension as an act of failing to recognise and accept the importance of the imperial pathos, its values and ideas. Furthermore, the harlequin's incomprehension serves Marlow's/author's polemic and not his (harlequin's) own.

fossilized personality, for when Marlow meets him he is already nearly dead. I will come back to the relationship between Marlow, Kurtz and the harlequin below.

The harlequin's unfinalisability is evident in his discourse and his character zone, as shown above, which Marlow cannot or does not want to dominate fully. Marlow certainly tries and to a certain extent succeeds to objectify and direct the harlequin's discourse in the particular direction. It is thus the harlequin who tells Marlow about Kurtz' savage practises while at the same time displaying his unconditional adoration of him. The harlequin's incomprehension of the inherent contradiction in his attitude towards Kurtz is also scorned by Marlow. But Marlow's exploitation of harlequin's naiveté as a foil to Kurtz is palpably manipulative and therefore fundamentally at odds with the whole image of the harlequin and his discourse. In relation to Kurtz, Marlow is interested in the harlequin's naiveté in order to expose Kurtz (in the same way as Marlow used the cannibals and the helmsman before). Marlow's manipulation of this naiveté comes to the fore in his ridiculing of the harlequin's words, which the latter naively and uncritically reproduces as Kurtz's. Furthermore, the harlequin's words are presented in the context that amplifies both his naiveté and Kurtz's degradation. The passage where this episode occurs is preceded by Marlow's sudden view of heads on the stakes around Kurtz's hut. This view provokes the harlequin's explanation. Note the use of indirect speech in the beginning.

I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these were the heads of rebels. I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers – and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks. “You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz,” cried Kurtz's last disciple. “Well, and you?” I said. “I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from anybody. How can you compare me to ...?” His feelings were too much for speech, and suddenly he broke down (HOD: 96).

It is as if Marlow intentionally avoids to allow the harlequin to say 'these are the heads of rebels' in his own speech,²⁰ because the naiveté inherent in his voice would immediately destroy that complicity with Kurtz, which Marlow deliberately wants here to stamp on him – “cried Kurtz's last disciple”. But as mentioned above, the harlequin's complicity is a manipulated and short-lived one, which serves the sole purpose of making Marlow's present exposure and indictment of Kurtz sound

²⁰ This surpression of the harlequin's discourse is not the only instance. Marlow exploits this device for exactly the same purpose on p. 92, where he is asking the harlequin about Kurtz. The harlequin's unwillingness to express himself is carefully manipulated by Marlow who inserts his own words as if they were harlequin's. The piecemeal exposition of their dialogue here (the swithcing between the direct and indirect speech) is another instance of Marlow's manipulation.

very powerfully. This paragraph thus may be seen as the ultimate point of Marlow's polemic that throws light on his preceding as well as following narration. Thus, after this exposure of Kurtz, the following descriptions of him will be just different instantiations of his degradation (e.g. his escape by crawling on all fours to the fire).

The tag of complicity does not stick to the harlequin for very long time and Marlow is, in fact, no longer interested in having this tag on him after having revealed the abyss of Kurtz's degradation (i.e. the sacrifices in his honour, raids, heads on stakes, etc.) through the harlequin's naïve incomprehension. But even before this unveiling of Kurtz, we know that the harlequin has nothing to do with Kurtz's raids and sacrifices. His naiveté and incomprehension, in fact, make such complicity impossible. It is also a crucial point to emphasise here that Marlow would not be able to cast light on Kurtz's degradation if it were not for the harlequin's naiveté. For if the harlequin were really complicit then he would not be naïve and consequently as lost as Kurtz and as a result he would not be able to tell anything to Marlow. That Marlow uses him in such a way, i.e. as an accomplice, is a calculated, purely polemical and at the same time revealing manipulation on his behalf.

Moreover, the harlequin's naïve incomprehension makes it difficult to pin an objectified image down upon him. His naiveté secures, as it were, the everlasting dynamics of his character, for he is able to display naïve incomprehension both of Kurtz's moral degradation and of Marlow's mocking of him. Thus the quote above continues:

"I don't understand," he groaned. "I've been doing my best to keep him alive, and that's enough. I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities. [...]" (Ibid.)

Here the harlequin both shrugs off his alleged complicity with Kurtz ("I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities"), and resists Marlow's objectifying discourse ("I have been doing my best to keep him alive, and that's enough."). Harlequin's self-debasement here is deeply ambivalent in that he also resurrects himself through it: he has no abilities, but one – to nurture human life, "and that's enough". Even Marlow is unable to ridicule this self-judgment further and the harlequin is also left in peace after it.

Thus, the harlequin's naïve incomprehension of the moral significance of Kurtz's downfall, on the one hand, and of Marlow's polemical exposition of it, on the other, allows him to escape through a narrow path between these two sides (i.e. the fool figure who fails to understand any kind of pathos, be it imperial or moral-ideological). This is why Marlow's mocking does not stick to him, but is

used specifically to pass judgment on Kurtz and accomplish his polemic with the audience. Significantly, the harlequin's (psychological) breakdown is, after all, an expression of utter incomprehension rather than that of admittance or understanding of either Marlow or Kurtz. And it is due to this incomprehension and naiveté that he is able to get immediately over this breakdown and be himself again, just as naïve and uncomprehending as before.²¹

The harlequin as a character is nonconcurrent with himself, he always adapts and changes according to the situation. Thus, while he is with Kurtz he adores and takes care of him. When Kurtz is gone, the harlequin moves on too. Furthermore, his naiveté and ideological ignorance also allow him to see and experience the other side of Kurtz - Kurtz the artist, Kurtz the poet, Kurtz the philosopher, etc. Kurtz is a man 'who has enlarged his mind' exactly because the harlequin is unable to understand the insane and greedy side of Kurtz. The harlequin's extreme adoration of Kurtz can likewise, in the very next moment, transform itself into an almost complete indifference towards him. This is visible in the episode when Kurtz is finally taken aboard the steamer, the harlequin pops up before Marlow for the last time to give him the last information about Kurtz (i.e. that it was Kurtz who ordered the attack on the steamer) and in the next moment he asks, very symbolically in my view, for a new pair of shoes from Marlow. The new pair of shoes marks a threshold of change for him in the same way as Kurtz's final self-judgment marks a threshold for Marlow. Both characters leave Kurtz behind them and move on. The harlequin's final, naïve and light-hearted indifference towards Kurtz is thus paralleled only by Marlow's own cold indifference exposed by him after Kurtz's death.

The voice has gone. What else had been there? But I am of course aware that the next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole (HOD: 112).

I see thus a parallel between the harlequin and Marlow in their relationship to Kurtz. For both of them Kurtz marks a frontier that they have to cross in order to realise themselves and to be able to move on. For both of these characters their relationship to Kurtz is marked by both adoration and promised enlightenment, on the one hand, and suffering, on the other. For Marlow the voice of Kurtz is the only relief from the pilgrims' all-pervasive mania for ivory and mutual backbiting. Kurtz's voice and his gift of expression is for Marlow:

²¹ Bakhtin points out perishment/resurrection as the classic features of a fool/harlequin figure (Bakhtin 2002:36).

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[...] the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of impenetrable darkness (HOD: 79).

Like for the harlequin, Kurtz for Marlow is a two-faced person. Kurtz is both a genius of expression, and a brutal maniac who wants to “Exterminate all the brutes!”. But for both of them Kurtz's voice is of primary importance. Thus, right after the attack on the steamer, the first thought that crossed Marlow's mind was that he now lost the inestimable privilege to hear Kurtz's voice. The harlequin accordingly stresses that ““You don't talk with that man – you listen to him,”[...]”. For both of them Kurtz's voice is like a calling that promises learning. Indeed, Marlow is driven upriver solely by the desire to hear Kurtz's voice, and the harlequin is willing to wait for Kurtz for weeks in order to hear him talk of love and art. But each of them, of course, needs Kurtz for their own needs. Thus, Marlow needs Kurtz in order to solve the moral and ethical problems of his epoch (i.e. combination of the civilising mission with business). The harlequin, on the other hand, needs Kurtz to give him the language for his emotional experiences. But for both of them Kurtz is a frontier of personal change. For Marlow the colonial context becomes a heart of darkness, in which moral ideas combined with utter lawlessness, is a uterus in which Kurtz is conceived. The harlequin gets his mind enlarged on things, which wilderness, presumably, could not give him an answer to or not in the same way as Kurtz could.

But the promised learning also entails suffering. Thus, both Marlow and harlequin are risking their lives in order to be with Kurtz (e.g. Marlow's long and perilous journey upriver; the harlequin's dangerous caretaking of Kurtz), but both of them, nevertheless, find this sacrifice/suffering rewarding and worthwhile. Thus, Marlow has learned through Kurtz how to hear and admit darkness in oneself as opposed to his auditors who believe principles and acquisitions to be the ultimate key to human strength. The harlequin, on the other hand, fills out the gaps in his own personal development of the youth.

In this light, both Marlow and the harlequin possess each their own form of naiveté, which they then lose through the figure of Kurtz. Marlow's ideological/ethical naiveté (around which the whole story is structured) is destroyed through Kurtz's moral sum-up – “The horror”! The harlequin's naiveté is his youthful inexperience (of which we do not know so much), but according to the harlequin's own judgment, Kurtz has enlarged his mind.²²

²² Marlow tries to expose this judgment ironically and polemically by inserting it side by side with the atrocities of Kurtz, so it in the end acquires another, opposite meaning similar to: “Kurtz has brainwashed my mind”. By doing this Marlow tries to control the harlequin's naiveté for his own, polemical purposes. But as I have discussed earlier, he succeeds in controlling it only for a short moment while the focus is on Kurtz and his downfall. After Kurtz is exposed,

But the harlequin is not only a foil to Kurtz, he is also, albeit only partly, Marlow's autobiographical alter ego. I read the harlequin's naiveté as the naiveté of young Marlow, that is, Marlow the young man who is propelled to the continent by the spirit of pure adventure. We remember that Marlow starts telling his story by describing his childhood fascination with an empty map of the continent and its big river, to which Marlow the boy promises himself to go. Marlow's reasons for travelling to the continent in the first place are innocent and unideological. Equally, the harlequin's innocence resembles that of a child and his life is an exact copy of a boyish dream of going to sea and experiencing something exciting and adventurous. Like in a boy's universe there is nothing else in his life but pure adventure. His passionately emotional relation to Kurtz seems to echo the magnitude of the first falling in love, as does his excitement at the first experiences of learning poetry seem to belong to the tender age of youth. Significantly, before Marlow puts him up against Kurtz, he envies the harlequin's pure spirit and glamour of adventure.

The glamour of youth enveloped his particoloured rags, his destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wonderings. For months – for years – his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase; and there he was gallantly, thoughtlessly alive, to all appearance indestructible solely by the virtue of his few years and his unreflecting audacity. I was seduced into something like admiration – like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him unscathed. He surely wanted nothing from wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through. 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 spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth (HOD: 90)

To be thoughtlessly alive, to be uncalculating, to be unreflecting etc., are all markers of youth, to which Marlow the teller is contrasted as an ideologically aware and reflecting person who struggles to survive in the wilderness. Although the disparity between these two characters may also be seen as a theme of transition from boyhood to adulthood, the harlequin figure is primarily intended, in my view, as an independent, taken to extreme theme of boyish imagination that serves as a stark contrast to the reality around him. The harlequin's naiveté lies precisely in his child-like innocence and unawareness that does not allow him to see the evil, which is so clear to adult eyes. Thus, the naïve spirit of adventure (embodied in the harlequin figure) that had also urged the young Marlow into the heart of the continent is exposed in HOD as no longer realistic and even dangerous in the age of colonialism: The harlequin's naïve unawareness and child-like innocence make him the person who has come closest to the utter horrors of colonialism without being able to judge or name

the harlequin's self-judgment loses its ironic meaning and becomes autonomous and directly signifying utterance (i.e. it means what it says).

them (it is Marlow who does it for him/us). Therefore Marlow sees in the harlequin/Kurtz relationship an inevitable destruction of the pure spirit of adventure within the framework of colonial exploitation and subjugation. And it is this destruction, in my view, that is the primary source of Marlow's lamenting tone in HOD. It is important to keep in mind here the difference that exists between the younger Marlow who made the journey and the elder Marlow who actually tells the story. In this light, the disparity between the younger Marlow's originally romantic expectations and the actual reality of the colonial settings has shifted the focus of the subsequent narration, done by the elder Marlow, to the description of the ideological premises of his epoch, the premises that had engendered this rapture between the idealistic, pure adventure and the destructive colonial context. So, what the young Marlow hoped would be a romantic adventure, turned out to be an unwilling partaking in the colonial plunder. Thus, at the basis of Marlow's lamentation lies also the fact that any individual act, no matter how naïve, innocent or idealistic, becomes implicated in the larger mechanism of the colonial exploitation. This theme, though implicitly, underlies the depiction of every more or less round character in the story. For example, in order to realise his childhood dream of travelling upriver, Marlow is "forced" to work for a colonial company that unscrupulously conducts its business; similarly, Kurtz's noble ideas have also become perverted as a result of his professional carrier; the harlequin's uncalculating and innocent spirit had made him an unwitting accomplice of Kurtz, and his (harlequin's) fairly earned lot of ivory earned him epithets of "a pestilential trader" and unfair competitor etc. The common denominator for these transitions from one extreme to the other is the age of colonialism and its ideology of cultural and physical domination and subjugation. It is in the light of this all-pervasive historical context of colonialism that we should understand why the spirit of adventure for the elder Marlow is now off and the heart of the continent has become a heart of darkness (HOD:22).

In the light of the considerations above, the harlequin Russian emerges not only as a foil to Kurtz, but also as an embodiment of the spirit of pure adventure that Marlow the boy used to possess. What points to this two-dimensional nature of the harlequin figure is the way he is depicted as a character. The harlequin, as mentioned earlier, is the only character in the story who, like the narrator himself, has what Bakhtin calls *the surplus of humanness*, that is, the unfinalized, future potential for change and development, which is denied to all other characters in the story (apart from the hidden narrator) (Morson 1990: 263). The presence of this important characterological trait implies that the harlequin cannot be a simple foil character (unless Conrad, like Dostoevsky, strove to picture most of his characters as personalities rather than as characters, that is, finalised images of

people).²³ But despite the harlequin's surplus of humanness, his naiveté is disavowed by Marlow who becomes aware of its inadequacy and, not the least, dangerous potential in the modern, colonial age. This is why in Marlow's polemical exposure of Kurtz the harlequin's naiveté is repudiated, while at the same time Marlow claims that he envies the harlequin's "modest and clear flame [that] seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely [...]. I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not mediated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism" (HOD: 91).

This comprehension of Marlow marks his own development as a character in that he distances himself from both the naïve belief in the existence of pure adventure and from the belief in pure, moral ideas (represented respectively by the harlequin and Kurtz) within the framework of colonialism.

But can the surplus of humanness and inherent in it potential for change be used to argue, as I did earlier, that the harlequin realises some of the younger Marlow's autobiographical material? To be sure, we can see some semblance between the adventurous harlequin and Marlow the boy, who is looking passionately at his map and dreaming of adventure. But more importantly, in my view, is the fact that for the harlequin, as for Marlow, Kurtz marks the frontier of change. As I argued earlier, both of them lose their naiveté through Kurtz, but whereas the harlequin's naiveté is embodied in his youthfulness, Marlow's naiveté is ideological. But despite this difference in naiveté, Marlow's and the harlequin's relationship to Kurtz is structured in fundamentally the same way. How is this similarity visible in the discourse of these two characters?

The primary common feature of Marlow's and the harlequin's discourses is that they both adopt an apologetic tone towards Kurtz. This is also highlighted by the fact that both of them are thought to be Kurtz's accomplices. Both the apology and complicity are the results of Marlow's and the harlequin's sympathy and understanding of Kurtz. Thus, the harlequin apologises for Kurtz's terrible nature by counterpoising it with Kurtz's genius – "You can't judge Mr Kurtz as you would an ordinary man" (HOD: 92). Furthermore, the harlequin excuses Kurtz's deteriorated mental and physical health by saying that "He was shamefully abandoned. A man like this, with such ideas. Shamefully! Shamefully!" (HOD: 92). The harlequin's naiveté makes him an unwitting accomplice of Kurtz in Marlow's and readers' eyes. Quite similar is Marlow's own apologetic account for

²³ Bakhtin in his book on Dostoevsky defines portrayal of characters as self-conscious personalities as an important feature of a polyphonic plot construction, that is, the plot where characters' voices sound independent of that of the author (see chapter two in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*)

Kurtz's degradation, though couched in more elaborate and harsher terms, by evoking the absence of civil order, importance of inborn strength, etc.. Marlow's apology on Kurtz behalf is, as mentioned earlier, used to polemically but indirectly argue with his audience that without the civil order they end up in the same way as Kurtz. Furthermore, Marlow's fascination by Kurtz's ideas prior to their meeting, leads the pilgrims afterwards to lump him together with Kurtz's "unsound method". But while both Marlow and the harlequin regard Kurtz as remarkable and extraordinary, they nevertheless both repudiate the evil side of Kurtz – the harlequin by his naïve incomprehension and non-participation, Marlow by his explicitly marked distance from Kurtz's lack of restraint. Significant for Marlow's and the harlequin's ambivalent relationship to Kurtz (for whom Kurtz is both a guru and a maniac), is that it is only them who possess the whole information about Kurtz. It is thus the harlequin who tells Marlow of Kurtz's 'savage' life before the pilgrims' arrival, and about Kurtz's order to attack the steamer. Similarly, Marlow is entrusted with the last information about Kurtz's life, his private letters and not the least Kurtz's last words ("The Horror!"). For both of them it is important that the information about Kurtz's downfall is only in their hands and even in the end of the story, when Marlow lies to Kurtz's Intended by saying that Kurtz's last words were her name, the other, dark side of Kurtz does not get disclosed. Thus, the pilgrims and the company officials are equally left with the picture of Kurtz as an outstanding genius, who is feared and envied till his end and beyond.²⁴ Thus, for everybody Kurtz is a remarkable man because of his abilities to talk and collect ivory, but it is only for Marlow and the harlequin he is remarkable because of his extremity, because of his will to take his ideas all the way and thus become a (negative) example for others. Thus, for the harlequin youth, Kurtz is extraordinary exactly because of Kurtz's extremity:

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. (HOD: 92)

For Marlow Kurtz is a remarkable man also for the same ability to take the last step, to cross over and take the consequences for one's actions:

He had summed up – he had judged. "The horror". After all this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction [...]. [...] True, he had made that last stride, he has stepped over the edge, while I had been

²⁴ The manager's description of Kurtz's method as 'unsound' is ironic in that it refers to the purely material rather than moral aspect of Kurtz's example. I will comment on this in the next chapter.

Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness through a Dialogic Lens

permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. [...] Better his cry – much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, [...] (HOD: 113-4)

Thus, for both Marlow and the harlequin their relation to Kurtz is ambivalently marked by apology/repudiation. While they both recognise the evil of Kurtz, they simultaneously also see personal development through his example. They are the only characters in the story who see this potential in Kurtz.

However, the surplus of humanness and the apologetic tone in the discourse of the two characters, as well as the similarity of their relationship to Kurtz are not persuasive enough to establish the harlequin's status as a character that realises the younger Marlow's autobiographical material. After all, all these common features may also be due to a coincidence in the plot and story construction.

However, what further strengthens the affinity between the two, in my view, is the naïve and romantic discourse of the harlequin, which stands in stark contrast to Marlow who tells the story. The context for my conclusive argument here derives from the logical assumption (supported by the story itself) that the younger Marlow was driven to explore the continent in the same way as the harlequin was, but in the act of telling the story the elder Marlow cannot convey the younger Marlow's experiences and feelings in one and the same narrative voice. This is because the naïveté of the younger Marlow and the ideological awareness of the elder Marlow cannot be meaningfully (i.e. without contradiction) incorporated in one narrative voice/discourse. Thus, the actual narrator (the elder Marlow) has to constantly "ideologize" the figure of Kurtz in order to be in keeping with the ideological perspective set by him from the very beginning of the story. But the actual journey was made by the ideologically naïve Marlow and therefore there is a tension between these two discourses. Therefore in order to avoid this tension but to express both of them nonetheless, the discourse of the naïve youth has been, but only partly, relegated to the harlequin figure who, in opposition to Marlow the narrator's ideologisation of Kurtz, "personalizes" the importance of Kurtz figure. In other words, while Marlow the narrator talks of the ideological significance of Kurtz, the harlequin on the contrary expresses the naïve and uncritical admiration of him. Where do we see the tension between the two Marlows?

I propose to take a look at the following passage, in which, after the attack on the steamer, Marlow thinks that he has lost the inestimable privilege of talking to Kurtz. Marlow's discourse here becomes extremely pathos-charged and approximates the passion of the harlequin's discourse when

the latter talks of Kurtz. But then suddenly Marlow's discourse breaks off because it is sensed as inadequate and childish by his grown-up, masculine audience, but also by Marlow himself:

I will never hear that chap speak after all, - and my sorrow had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush. I couldn't have felt more of lonely desolation somehow, had I been robbed of a belief or had missed my destiny in life Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd? Well, absurd. Good Lord! Mustn't a man ever - Here, give me some tobacco.... (HOD: 79)

The audience's reaction to Marlow's emotional outbreak here resembles Marlow's own ironic reaction to the harlequin's passionate "this man has enlarged my mind". But we can sense behind Marlow's frankness above ("had I been robbed of a belief or had missed my destiny in life") not his quest for the ideological meaning of his historical epoch, but rather the indication of Kurtz's importance for Marlow as a person. Significant here is also Marlow's association of his own emotion for Kurtz with that of the naïve savages', for whom Kurtz is the ultimate authority, a deity. Marlow's rhetorical question to his auditors - "Mustn't a man ever" expose his emotions? - is not interpreted as positive by Marlow himself. Not because Marlow does not want to talk about his emotions, but because he cannot. The problem is, as mentioned above, in Marlow's discourse that until now has been characterised by an affirmative and critical tone, now suddenly emerges to be at odds with this new pathos-charged orientation. Significantly, after this break-off Marlow directs his discourse away from the personal and back to the ideological aspects of the Kurtz-figure by unveiling the latter's downfall.²⁵ Marlow is thus unable to fully expose the original naiveté of the young Marlow because the story is told in retrospect by the already jaded, Buddha-like Marlow who from the very start has cast the story in the ideological light of his changed personality. Marlow's attempts to express more personal/psychological change thus do not harmonize with the larger picture of his discourse or with the expectations of his audience. But what Marlow cannot say directly through his own discourse, he can say it through the harlequin figure. For instance, Marlow would not be able to say to his audience that Kurtz has enlarged his mind, without at the same time undermining the credibility of his own discourse. In the mouth of the ideologically aware Marlow such statement would sound very odd and incredible, for how can a maniac enlarge somebody's mind unless that somebody is a naïve harlequin youth, who seeks another sort of (more personal)

²⁵ Marlow's manoeuvring away from the emotional to the ideological aspects of Kurtz figure is very interesting discourse-wise and deserves a special attention but will not be dealt with here.

development? That is why Marlow the teller has to pursue the strictly ideological significance of Kurtz's example and consequently to relate ironically to the harlequin's own statement.

The young Marlow who has made the journey upriver is thus lost in the act of telling, in which the narrator is focused primarily on the ideological aspects of the journey rather than on how it was perceived originally. Accordingly, Marlow's emphasis to his audience in the beginning of the story that he is not interested in telling what happened to him personally, but rather about the effect the journey has had on him (HOD:21). This emphasis on the effect of the journey precludes Marlow from expressing, judging by his discourse in the quote above, even the slightest emotions and naiveté of the younger Marlow. In other words, the extreme ideological perspective does not allow to convey a more balanced view of the original, autobiographical Marlow. And it is this extremity of Marlow's narration, in my view, that has created the extremity (since no middle way is possible) of the harlequin figure who can with surplus convey all the aspects of the younger Marlow - naiveté, ideological unawareness, emotions, spirit of adventure and exploration, passion, etc. The harlequin figure, in this light, emerges as a more effective device of narrative distancing in the story than the artificially and imperfectly created frames, as we saw in the fifth chapter.

But the harlequin cannot and does not reflect the younger Marlow completely, exactly for the same reason as the elder Marlow cannot do it – both of them are each other's antipodes: pure adventure vs. ideology or youth vs. adulthood. The harlequin consequently remains within his youthful realm and Marlow the narrator within his. It is only when the two meet in Kurtz and through him exhibit a more balanced picture of a personality, with both naive ideological beliefs and naïve romantic ideals. Marlow/the author had not been able or simply did not want to combine the two voices in one for at least two closely related reasons. First, such a fusion would result in an indeterminate narrative voice which would unavoidably have felt as a contradiction in the monologic construction and, secondly, such indeterminacy would have weakened Marlow's position in the polemic (for he then would not be able to assume the position of a Buddha preaching the moral lesson to his auditors). Marlow's stance as a preacher/Buddha is thus allowed by his detachment from the extremities of both Kurtz and the harlequin.²⁶

²⁶ The rather short role of the harlequin in the narrative points furthermore to the smaller significance of the romantic spirit of pure adventure to be realised in the story. However, this form of naivete, in my view, is an important part of Marlow's original, autobiographical self. Hence the harlequin's exclusive surplus of humanness and unfinishability as a character.

The Journey down the River and the End of the Story

In this conclusive chapter of my analysis I would like to focus shortly on the last part of the story in which Marlow brings his polemic with the audience to the close. We have seen that while travelling upriver Marlow gradually engages with his audience in a polemic by using different examples (e.g. the representation of the natives, wilderness, Kurtz, etc). The culminating point of this polemic in the second chapter is the final unveiling of Kurtz's moral degradation. In the third chapter of the novella we are presented with Kurtz himself and the extra details about him through the harlequin Russian. After this climax of both the story and its ideological content, Marlow's discourse accordingly stops being polemically oriented and becomes more reflective and philosophical. This change in discourse is also reflected in the dramatic style of the narration done in sombre and unexcited tone. The merry sailor jargon and the yarn genre are equally absent towards the end of the story. Furthermore, following the end of Marlow's intense polemic and opposition to the audience, Marlow's discourse becomes more intimate and exhibits confidence in the audience, as if asking for their understanding and empathy. After the death of Kurtz, Marlow reveals his inner feelings with much pathos and expressiveness unseen in other parts of the story. But even here Marlow does not want to focus on his personal feelings and therefore remains faithful to his chosen narrative voice. Instead of his own, personal change Marlow, as mentioned earlier, exteriorises the figure of Kurtz as a frontier of change not only for himself but also for his auditors (and readers too for that matter).

And it is not my own extremity I remember best – a vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain, and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things – even of this pain itself. No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through (HOD: 113)

The understanding of Kurtz-figure becomes the measuring stock for Marlow's auditors' understanding and acceptance of the story's message. It is in this light the final dialogue of Marlow with Kurtz's Intended, in my view, could be seen as a step-by-step summing up of the story, intended to most polemically, albeit most implicitly, communicate Marlow's point.

The nature of this dialogue is rather peculiar in that it is based on the fundamental doubleness of meaning, doubleness that cannot escape any reader irregardless of how inattentive or unenlightened he or she might be. All what Marlow tells to the Intended acquires, against the background of her naïve ignorance of Kurtz, a double meaning and the reader, who shares with Marlow the same information about Kurtz, is thus forced to participate and reflect on who Kurtz really is. But, the

discrepancy between Marlow's words and the words of the Intended is so obvious that the dialogue easily comes to resemble a fill-in-the-gaps exercise for the audience who should, for instance, have no trouble to substitute Kurtz's last words "The horror!" for Marlow's "your name". Aaron Fogel has pointed out the coercive nature of this last dialogue in HOD, the dialogue in which Marlow is forced to speak by the Intended who almost makes him lie to her, but since "your name" is not her name Marlow is able to avoid lying without also disclosing the truth (Fogel 1985:35). But if Marlow is coerced to speak then the readers are also coerced to reflect, for they possess the same information as Marlow.

Many feminist critics have commented on the passive nature of Kurtz's Intended and women in general in HOD who, according to Marlow himself, should be helped "to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse"(HOD:80). While it is true that Marlow's last argument is hinged upon the utter discrepancy between the Intended's ignorance and Marlow's and his male auditors' supreme knowledge, I however believe that Marlow's use of the Intended's "beautiful world" is deeply ironic and hence also polemical. To be sure, Marlow quite openly utilises the stereotype of women as passive and living in "the world of their own", but it is also the stereotype that his male audience onboard Nellie the yacht widely shares. Therefore, by structuring his last dialogue in which the essence of the story is disclosed through the female naiveté, Marlow as if asks whether his audience can really understand the story or if they too, like women, live in the "beautiful world of their own".²⁷ The rather indifferent comment of the Director – "We have lost the first of the ebb," right after Marlow finished telling his story, points to the polemical irony on Marlow's behalf and thereby affirms his perception of the audience as not being able to understand the full significance of Kurtz's downfall. Significantly, before his meeting with the Intended, Marlow laboriously strives to align the figure of Kurtz with any possible person in the society by making his appearance look as general as possible. Thus, Kurtz's colleagues and relatives have all ascribed different professions to Kurtz, from politician and great musician to painter and journalist, in order in the end to call him a "universal genius", the epithet which Marlow hastens to endorse. But the journalist whom Marlow sees last before he pays a visit to the Intended, also calls Kurtz an "extremist" who "could get himself to believe anything – anything" (HOD: 116). And it is exactly in this capacity of an extremist that Marlow (and the harlequin) needs and admires Kurtz for. For it

²⁷ Marlow's merciful and helpless "kneeling" before the Intended's belief in Kurtz and her beautiful world, can be symbolically read as the narrator's kneeling before his audience's intact universal/imperial identity and pleading them to try to understand. The banal summing up of the story, disguised behind 'a conversation with a woman', can be thus also seen as a desperate act on the narrator's behalf to communicate at least the moral essence if not other, finer details of the story.

is the extreme nature of Kurtz that allows him (Kurtz) to take the colonial assumptions of the inherent superiority of the whites to their extreme end (i.e. to really believe in them and assume a role of an omnipotent Deity) and thus to expose them as inadequate, as fundamentally horror-ridden. Marlow respects Kurtz exactly for his honesty and devotion to the principles, to the idea – “something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to...” (HOD: 20). But Kurtz does not only set himself up as a deity for others “to bow down before and offer a sacrifice to”, he also sacrifices himself and his sanity for the sake of the idea, in order in the end to pass the final judgment. In this light, Kurtz's extremity can be read as a catalyst of the historical epoch that shows its moral and ethical dead-end long before the natural pace of the historical development has reached the same conclusion. Kurtz is thus opposed to Marlow's audience who prefer to tread the careful path between the butcher and the policeman or to the pilgrims who hypocritically disguise exploitation and subjugation behind words like ‘trade’ and ‘business’. Hence the manager's description of Kurtz's method as “unsound” rings hollow in Marlow's ears, for it shows the narrowly material comprehension of the situation, just as the indifferent words of the director at the end of the story seem to pass Marlow's story as yet another simple sailor yarn, as a story devoid of any real significance. Thus, both the pilgrims and the audience continue to exist in the grey zone of the imperial myth, the cornerstone of which is the “the horror”, but which they neither are able to hear nor admit (not even if they are told about it!). There is only one auditor, the hidden narrator, for whom Marlow's story has changed his perception of the greatest town on earth and of its major imperial artery, Thames, which now emerge both as great but also dark, while the other auditors seem to continue to live in the heart of ignorant darkness. But the hidden narrator, as we know, is Marlow's alter ego or vice versa and both are the vehicles for the author's ideology and direct discourse.

Discussion

In this chapter I would like to discuss my analysis of the novel within the broader framework of Bakhtin's ideas on the heteroglot nature of novelistic discourse, which I shortly presented in the theoretical chapter.

The initial theoretical framework for my analysis, guided by Bakhtin's ideas, was to investigate how the languages of heteroglossia enter the text and form an artistic unity inside it.

We have seen that the frame narrative of HOD with two posited narrators is intended as a narrative distancing device by the author. Although the two posited narrators (Marlow and the hidden narrator) are the vehicles for the authorial direct discourse and intention, both of them carry languages that reflect different social voices and inherent in them different points of view. Thus, the hidden narrator's voice assumes naively and hence ironically the commonly held view on the grace and grandeur of the British Empire. His discourse is accordingly pompous and the genre chosen resembles a celebration speech. However, already here the first signs of unease or contradiction are revealed in the form of "a mournful gloom brooding over the greatest city on earth" as well as by the sunset setting chosen for the contextualisation of Marlow's subsequent story. When the darkness falls, Marlow starts telling his story. His is the voice that is intended to reflect the point of view that is critical of the commonly held one. Marlow's voice is furthermore a construction of two different languages/discourse types – the literary and the sailor one. While the literary language allows Marlow to gain access into the wealth of cultural resources (literature, knowledge, etc.) that underpin the major voices of the heteroglossia of his epoch, the sailor jargon allows Marlow to introduce a discourse type whose point of view and conducive for its expression genres (yarn, tall tale, jokes, etc.) are alien to the literary language. It is, as mentioned earlier, in the harmonious combination of these two languages that the particularity of Marlow's narrative voice lies.

As Bakhtin asserts, upon entering the novel each language loses its distinct accent and participates in a dialogic relationship with other voices, but the author may prioritise, as in a monologic novel, one language above all others. We have also seen that Marlow's own voice is uncontested, it is not just *a* voice among other voices, it is *the* voice that sees and shapes the story in accordance with Marlow's point of view and experiences. Now, how would we place HOD on the Bakhtinian scale between the monologic and dialogic lines of literary development? As we have seen in the theory chapter, the two stylistic lines are defined by their relation to the omnipresent heteroglossia of language and culture, heteroglossia that surrounds and stratifies the commonly shared language along the multiple generic, social, professional, generational, etc, lines. Given this natural condition of language, no text can fail to respond to the heteroglossia of one's epoch, in which the author's language is just one out of many. In this light, the novel cannot be completely monoglot or completely heteroglot, but rather the author has to choose what languages should be in and which should be out. Monologisation of literary representation of life is therefore a sort of necessary streamlining of life's ongoing and fundamentally conflictual dialogue to a limited number of languages and inherent in them points of view. For instance, a dictator's speech has only one

viewpoint or maximum two - that of his generals. Thus, the very act of monologisation of heteroglossia is already a response to it, the response that identifies one's ideological stance towards the dialogue of one's epoch. The type of discourse in the monologic text is direct and governs the representation of not only the settings and the story-line, but equally so the representation of the discourses/speeches of other characters and their ideology (i.e. their particular view and conception of what life/reality is for them). Finally, there is only one accent and one point of view in the monologic text, through which heteroglossia is filtered and in relation to which other, differing points of view are either denied any signifying power or polemically repudiated.

Likewise, in HOD the speech of the pilgrims is mercilessly plotted to sound against them in a parody that cuts to the very bone of their futile and destructive presence. The speech of the natives' is accordingly framed to sound in keeping with their image as rudimentary souls. Kurtz's voice too is reduced to a few, basic phrases that all betray his image of a degenerated human, whose last glimpse of intelligence are expressed in his final words. The harlequin's speech is manipulated to contrastingly reveal the abyss of Kurtz's degradation, but the harlequin's naiveté also points to another direction, so much envied and lamented by Marlow. But for Marlow the harlequin's voice is also perceived as unreal, as something almost imaginary in the harsh reality of the colonial context with its erected barriers of fear and hostility: "Sometimes I ask myself whether I had ever really seen him – whether it was possible to meet such a phenomenon!..." (HOD:103).

HOD thus appears to be a monologic text in terms of its narration and representation, the text where everything is subsumed by the intact unity of the authorial discourse and point of view. This alone would justify our placement of the novel in the first line of novel's development, the line that approaches heteroglossia from above. But even though HOD does not deploy a polyphonic form that reflects multiple social voices of its epoch, it is not, strictly speaking, a monologic novel that represents only one voice. As we have seen the hidden narrator introduces the voice of common opinion through his words, Marlow's own voice is also cleft, in that he speaks both through the learned literary discourse and the lower strata sailor jargon. So, we have at least three different points of view, plus the one of the harlequin that retains some of its independent power to mean as a separate voice from that of the narrator. So, although Marlow's direct discourse monologises these different voices by polemically repudiating their inherent points of view (e.g. the pilgrims', the auditors', partly the harlequin's and those of Kurtz and his Intended), his own direct discourse is stratified from within by at least two discourse types and inherent in them different and even slightly conflictual points of view as well as by a number of literary and extraliterary genres that

follow with these two discourse types. But before I discuss how Marlow's discourse is stratified from within and how it affects Marlow's narration, I would like first to comment on the nature of the dialogising background and its changing role in Marlow's narration.

I already dealt in the second chapter of the analysis with the shift in the form-shaping idea that takes place throughout the different parts of the story, the shift that has not only affected Marlow's discourse but also the role played by the audience/dialogising background. Throughout the story the perceived audience emerges as a monolithic, homogenised group or as what we can also call the common/public opinion. Thus, in the first chapter, while describing the colonial context of the Belgian Congo, Marlow dialogises against the common opinion, the dialogic relationship is marked by agreement. Marlow evokes here the different aspects of what by the common opinion is regarded as absurd, unacceptable, violent, futile, inhuman, etc. In the second chapter Marlow's perception of the audience is similarly restricted to a very few characteristic features, all of which derive from the opposition of the utter wilderness/silence, on the one hand, to the multiple mechanisms of civil control in the European society, on the other. But this time Marlow's dialogic relationship with the audience is marked by disagreement or by opposition. Marlow's discourse becomes increasingly polemical and his evocations of the common opinion are deeply rhetorical (i.e. the possible objections to his discourse are predicted and incorporated into his speech). Furthermore, the distinctiveness and exclusiveness of Marlow's personal experiences (which he opposes to those of his auditors with neat and beautiful world of public opinion, neighbours, butcher and policemen) and the colonial context itself (with its rendition of all things European inadequate: language, culture, technology, logic, etc.) all contribute to the unlimited power of Marlow's voice. Discourse-wise this implies that Marlow has his audience on a very short leash, so to speak. For not only he is able to select what to display to their view, but he also does it in the context in which their opinion is inadequate and, in fact, unqualified. In this light, the utter inadequacy and powerlessness of social heteroglossia of the imperial society becomes a very prominent feature in the colonial narrative of HOD. Marlow's view of the imperial society in HOD can be thus compared to a distant image that stands out in its monolithic and indistinct roughness. Similarly, Marlow does not differentiate between the different classes of the imperial society and their necessarily different perceptions of the Empire. The audience is lumped together in one undifferentiated mass of *common* opinion. So, we could say that the colonial context itself acts as a powerful monologising, centrepetal force on the social heteroglossia by allowing only the rough features of its organisation to be visible.

But it is not only Marlow's auditors that are unqualified to relate to the wilderness, Marlow as a narrator, too has problems in finding the appropriate language(s) and genre(s) in which to tell his story, to communicate its essence to the auditors. Many critics have emphasised Marlow's/Conrad's self-conscious difficulty to make the language adequate to his descriptions of the colonial context and articulation of his own experiences. According to Jerry Wasserman, Conrad believed that "Words are inherently unequal to the task of reproducing and communicating experience, but since Marlow is a *story-teller* they must necessarily be his medium" (Wasserman 1974: 332, italics in the original). Wasserman argues that Conrad solved this problem of language by making Marlow "the visual focus of the novel" (Ibid. 328). Thus, Marlow through "His physical presence both compensates for the limitations of language and helps explain them" (Ibid.). Wasserman goes through the novel by showing that Marlow is acutely aware of the inadequacy of his own descriptions, but, on the other hand, it is very important for Marlow to keep up the illusive forms of language in order to remain sane, the language becomes thus "the tenuous civilized veneer separating the individual consciousness from the darkness"(Ibid. 331).

Indeed, the fundamental arbitrariness of language points to the inherent social nature of language and negotiation of the formal and semantic content of its signs (i.e. sign=signifier/signified). But this is a very abstract and general view of language that can only help to conceptualise the nature of the unitary national language, but fails to take into account further multiple levels of its stratification along the lines of genre, profession, generation, etc. Accordingly, Bakhtin emphasises the directedness and intentionality in-built in each language and genre of heteroglossia. Each language of heteroglossia has the power to inhabit the common language with its own accents, intentions and points of view (Bakhtin 2001: 292-3). So, despite words being ambiguous and ambivalent entities, they are not neutral in the sense that they belong to no one. The question thus remains with what accents, genres and languages Marlow's narrative voice is populated.

The fact that HOD is a colonial adventure novel and, say, not a classical social-realist novel (as, for instance, works of Dickens and Dostoyevsky are), may seem to simplify our task of uncovering different social voices in the novel because there is only one voice, that of common imperial opinion. But in reality the problem is even bigger with the novels like HOD, because the heteroglot background is silent and it is Marlow who dialogises, at his own will, against its different aspects. The uncovering of the dialogising background is of paramount importance, according to Bakhtin, for the understanding of all the nuances of the authorial direct discourse. But as the novel becomes

distant from us in time, its dialogising background fades, as well as the distance between the incorporated languages and genres seem to flatten out and they all begin to sound as just one language (Bakhtin 2001: 418).

As we saw above, the dialogising background in the first part of the story is calm and agreeing with Marlow in his indictment of the Belgians. Significant in this part is also the colonial settlement, a small community of the colonizers and their servants. We have seen that Marlow deploys here the genre of parody of manners, which is, according to Wilson Harris, is “the basis of protest fiction” (Harris 1981: 87). We can thus easily puzzle out Marlow's and his auditors' role as judges and jury in this part of the story, as the ones who are protesting against the inhuman conditions and irresponsible colonialism. However, as the story progresses the parody is superseded by the adventure genre with in-built in it ideas of trial and becoming (*Bildung*). And it is also in this part that Marlow himself becomes an object of his own discourse, that is to say, he is also tested together with the audience and is offered a chance to change himself in the light of Kurtz. But here too the dialogising background is kept at its simple: the rough features of civil order, stability, belief in principles, etc. Marlow's polemical portrayals of the natives and the rather emphatic affirmation of their humanity are all directed, as it were, to voice the commonly held prejudices among the auditors, to test their beliefs and opinions. But the emerging figure of Kurtz appears to change the picture of Marlow's prior dialogising background quite radically, in that Kurtz is now pictured as a person of a universal origin: “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (HOD:83). From the observers and judges, the audience has now become directly and actively involved in contributing to the evil and hence to the darkness that is now brooding over London. Such is the narrative curve of HOD, along which the audience is gradually persuaded to accept the darkness that lies hidden inside their own hearts as well. Marlow's laborious attempts to give Kurtz a universal origin point to this all-inclusive, universal nature of Kurtz's example. Indeed, Marlow's voicing of this background is more complex toward the end of the story, following the unveiling of Kurtz. Some critics, for example, have pinpointed the affinities between Kurtz and the actual historical people of Conrad's epoch. For instance, Marlow's journey upriver to rescue Kurtz could have been inspired by the controversial explorer, Henry Stanley and his expedition to find Dr. Livingstone and his later expedition to rescue Emin Pasha, the latter described in Stanley's book *In Darkest Africa* (HOD xxi). Emin Pasha was a rank of a governor of the Equatorial Province of Sudan. He was a German explorer, Eduard Schnitzler, who, according to Stanley, was a great linguist and possessed about seventy five tons of ivory (HOD xxi). Another affinity is to the already mentioned McClintock's

expedition that was arranged to investigate what happened to Franklin and his crew and its shocking news of cannibalism.

There are more affinities between Kurtz and Stanley, as, for instance, both of them have their Intended back in England; Kurtz's dreaming of kings meeting him at railway stations seems to be a direct allusion Stanley's arrival to England after he found Dr. Livingstone; Stanley, but now like Marlow, was entrusted with Livingstone's private documents; likewise, Stanley in his book *Through the Dark Continent* had also argued "that Africans respect only 'force, power, boldness and decision'", which is reminiscent of Kurtz's "Exterminate all the brutes!". This statement by Stanley and his violent attack on the natives, who denied him food at Bambireh Island on Lake Victoria, provoked Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society to complain to the newspaper *Colonial Intelligencer* that "the murderous acts of retaliation he committed were unworthy of a man who went to Africa professedly as a pioneer of civilisation" (see the chapter on 'Stanley and Leopold' in the introduction to HOD by R.Hampson, Penguin Classics 2005).

These affinities are striking and relevant to shed light on the actual historical context, as they may also help to explain some of the characteristic traits of the Kurtz-figure, as well as some of his short and inconclusive statements and thoughts (conveyed by Marlow's own speech) that might sound familiar to the original audience but are likely to be lost on the modern readers.

I have mentioned all these in order to point to the relative, compared to the other parts, complexity of the dialogising background towards the end of the story. We can see in the above that there is no clear-cut modelling of the historical incidents and persons onto the story itself. Rather, Marlow seems to allude to the many-faceted dialogue of his epoch, the dialogue that had Africa as its centre and in which the words and statements of the prominent explorers are freely intertwined to suit the narrator's own needs.

However, the imperial side of Kurtz is just one of his facets. Politically and broadly-ideologically, his character alludes to imperialism and its universal encirclement of the globe. But more importantly, Kurtz is an embodiment of the imperial ideology of racial and civilisational superiority that every citizen of the Empire is a bearer of. The universality of Kurtz is thus not only political/imperial, it is also to an equal degree personal, for it alludes to the intrinsic, superior value of the white man as such. The idea of trial and becoming in HOD are related directly to this intrinsic value of the white man. Marlow's polemic with the audience is underpinned by this most fundamental common feature that Kurtz, Marlow and his white audience share. The testing of Marlow and his audience thus takes place by their power inherent in the imperial ideology of

superiority, while their becoming is through what use you make of it: good, bad or none (like the harlequin). As an imperial citizen you are, as it were, automatically forced to mediate between these three options and the boundary between them is hair-thin. For instance, the harlequin's non-involvement becomes a passive participation; well-meant (albeit despotic) intervention of Kurtz, if disobeyed, degenerates into violence; Marlow's own romantic journey makes him an accomplice of colonialism by virtue of his European outlook "After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings" (Marlow after receiving a "rascally grin" from a native escorting the "rebels", p.33). That is why Marlow tries hard to stay aloof from giving any prescriptions apart from the abstract inborn strength, selflessness and recognition of common nature (at least these secure one against Kurtz's horror). But prescriptions and solutions are, however, not Marlow's/Conrad's main agenda in HOD. The primary idea and intention is to expose the context itself, its potential effect and impact on any imperial traveller whatsoever (be it Livingstone, Stanley or Marlow/Conrad himself). The absence of social and legal constraints combined with the ideology of superiority, make the wilderness an extremely powerful test for the white man's humanity and civilisation. The trial by the wilderness becomes also a trial by one's imagination projected onto the mute colonial context within the broader colonial framework of superiority and also, particularly in the case of Congo, total impunity - "Anything - anything can be done in this country" (as the Manager's uncle says in HOD, p.57). The wilderness, through its silence and ideological non-resistance, allows one not only to do but also to believe anything (e.g. Marlow's imagining of being eaten by the cannibals). Kurtz's ability to get himself to believe anything is thus also boosted in the context of the wilderness and, as a result, his humanitarian ideas acquire the divine status and Kurtz himself becomes the God of wrath and mercy. This is what Marlow is both abhorred and fascinated by. For, on the one hand, he is attracted by Kurtz's eloquence and ideas, while, on the other hand, Marlow is shocked by the extremity of Kurtz's deeds (e.g. when Marlow sees the heads of "rebels" on the stakes around Kurtz's hut).

Kurtz is generally read as a liberal-imperialist figure or as a businessman cum civiliser (which of course he is!). But the more subtle, though amply emphasised by Marlow, imaginative aspect of Kurtz's degradation has not been addressed seriously enough. This is despite the fact that precisely this (imaginative) aspect of Kurtz is what, I believe, realises the autobiographical material in the story. Therefore, what happened to the original Marlow/Conrad is not to be found in the incidents of the story proper, but in its imaginings of what could have happened as well as in the apologetic tones of Marlow's discourse. Marlow's story and especially the journey upriver part is first and

foremost an exploration of imagination under the conditions of the particular context. The majority of Marlow's descriptions of the wilderness and of the natives are accordingly the product of his hypothetical speculations (polemical/moral/racially prejudiced, to be sure), but they are not factual nor do they pretend to be so.²⁸ We have also seen that the progression of the story-line (i.e. the events) in this part of the story is disproportionate to Marlow's piling on of different hypothetical situations, the inner projections of his own consciousness. These imagined situations, as mentioned, are all intended to test the hero and his auditors, but the fundamental source of these test-images of the wilderness is Kurtz's liberal manifesto that conceptualises what I described above as the intrinsic value of the coloniser. This is how it affected Marlow:

"By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded," etc., etc. From that point on he soared and took me with him. [...] It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the unbounded power of eloquence – of words – of burning noble words (p. 83)

However, this enthusiasm and naiveté of the original Marlow have to be suppressed or voiced-over in the act of re-visiting his experiences. Thus, in the journey upriver, where Marlow, as it were, zooms in on the natives, there are always two accents, one superior the other is moderating. As we have seen, Marlow's superiority is expressed within the framework of the evolutionary perspective and thereby follows the "guidelines" of Kurtz's manifesto. However, Marlow always has to moderate it by affirming the common humanity and by highlighting its different aspects (e.g. restraint, profundity of look, etc.). Kurtz's manifesto is not narrowly his, but, as I mentioned above, it is the inescapable identity of any imperial citizen. Hence, Kurtz for Marlow is not a person in the first place but a voice, eloquence, "the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness" (p.79). Marlow, in fact, spends half a page pondering over the importance of Kurtz as a voice rather than as a person doing something.

I made the strange discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, "Now I will never see him," or "Now I will never shake him by the hand," but, "Now I will never hear him." The man presented himself as a voice. (p.79)

²⁸ Marlow's descriptions are not attempted to be ethnographically/scientifically exact and detailed, but rather as visual and superficial images to be used polemically.

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In this connection it is also important to specify that Kurtz is not mad in terms of his sanity, it is his imagination or soul that is mad or, as Marlow puts it in the foreshadowing metaphor, “the fascination of the abomination”(p.20). Hence, Marlow's apologetic tone on Kurtz's behalf is not employed in order to redeem his brutal ivory enterprise (which Marlow harshly repudiates), but to account for the power of the particular ‘colonial imagination’ upon him. Thus the following quote acquires a double suggestiveness:

Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man. And I was not arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear [...]. 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 it myself (p.107)

Marlow's discourse sounds apologetic because Marlow himself, most visibly in the journey upriver part, realises the power of the colonial context upon his own imagination. Marlow's deliberate, bordering even on hyped, affirmation of the natives' humanity, one's innate strength and the saving quality of physical work are all evoked in order to counter his own imagination, to find an antidote to its potential darkness.

I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood[...] When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality – the reality, I tell you – fades. The inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily (p.60)

So, by the time Marlow reaches Kurtz's station his imagination is already inflamed by the wilderness and as Marlow himself says, Kurtz's story was not so much told as “suggested to me in desolate exclamations, completed by shrugs, in interrupted phrases, in hints ending in deep sighs” (p.93).

This imaginative dimension of the colonial context in HOD is important for our understanding of Marlow's ambivalence towards Kurtz, which can also, albeit mistakenly, be read as Marlow's ambivalence towards imperialism.²⁹ What Marlow tries to voice is rather the power of the wilderness to excite imagination but also, at the same time, to allow for the uninhibited implementation of the imagined ideas. There is, as mentioned, a very thin boundary between imagining something and having the power to carry it out in the colonial context, that is, in the colonial context the reality and imagination acquire the potential to merge (or, to repeat myself, as

²⁹ As I mentioned earlier Marlow deliberately avoids voicing his political opinion on imperialism, but he seems to subscribe to the instructive/guiding form of imperialism that is best visible in the helmsman passage.

the manager's uncle says: "Anything – anything can be done in this country" (p.57)).³⁰ Thus, Marlow, after having returned home exhausted from the wilderness, says: "It was not my strength that wanted nursing, it was my imagination that wanted soothing" (p. 114-5).

But it is difficult to convey the nature of this kind of experience to the audience, hence Marlow's insistence on the effect of the journey on him. Marlow tries to find an allegory for his experience by evoking for his auditors the absence of social order and utter silence. But even if this can be imagined it still cannot be fully comprehended. In this light the director's indifferent comment by the end of Marlow's story may also be said to point to the inconveyable nature of his experience, of the peculiar effect of the colonial imagination. Marlow is also acutely aware of the difficulty to communicate the full meaning of his story to the audience:

'This simply because I had a notion it somehow would be of help to that Kurtz whom at the time I did not see – you understand. He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is the very essence of dreams....'

He [Marlow] was silent for a while.

'...No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence, - that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone....'

We can thus, with some reservations, say that Marlow's fleshing out of Kurtz the person is not so much for his own sake as for his audience. The material Kurtz is given all the characteristic features of an imperial explorer that, as we saw earlier, might have been inspired by some actual historical people. But by making the Kurtz-figure concrete and intelligible to his auditors, Marlow at the same time loses the more subtle, incommunicable sensation of being possessed by one's imagination in the context of utter lawlessness. Kurtz the person is therefore necessary to tell the story, but he, at the same time, also blurs the ambience of the wilderness and its impact on one's consciousness (i.e. the material Kurtz, as it were, pulls the meaning of the text onto the narrowly ideological/historical side). But at the same time there is no story without the more or less tangible Kurtz-figure, because for Marlow himself his own experience is also something abstract and formless.

³⁰ In this light HOD captures the nature of the atrocities that are legitimised from above, i.e. ideologically - ideology that has the power to transform ordinary people into ruthless murderers. This legitimised superiority, similar to that of the colonial context, was soon to be reproduced in Europe itself (Holocaust and Stalin's purges of "alien elements", being the major examples).

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And it is not my own extremity I remember best – a vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain, and a careless contempt for evanescence of all things [...] (p.113)

But Marlow does not stop trying to convey the effect and he therefore attempts to map out the rough, imaginary outlines of Kurtz's horror (e.g. the nocturnal sacrifice ceremonies, the raids, the heads on stakes, etc.). The particular nature of the colonial imagination and its potential 'fascination of the abomination' (in order to be conveyed) need some degree of exteriorisation, but Marlow chooses to do it in a very sketchy and unspecific way ("the story suggested to me in desolate exclamations..." or "I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used when approaching Kurtz" Marlow to the harlequin p.95). Hence Marlow's emphasis on his *living through* the imagined extremity of Kurtz. But at the same time by leaving the sight of horror open and the wilderness dark and impenetrable, Marlow strives to communicate the unspeakable by allowing the audience to excite their own imagination along these dotted lines, to voice their own heart of darkness, so to speak.³¹ But the readers/auditors' horror and darkness will be their own, not exactly Marlow's, for him it is important to create the context or the effect. Significantly, the materialisation of Kurtz (i.e. giving him the recognisable traits) in the narrative is disproportionately smaller to Kurtz as a voice, as an imagined entity in the story. Thus, after Marlow reaches the inner station and finds Kurtz, the materialisation of Kurtz the person accordingly speeds up, as it can also be seen in the compact speeches of both the harlequin and Marlow in this part of the story. From this point on the story is, as it were, ushered towards the end. If Marlow's discourse before was coloured by sailorly merriness and familiarity, now it becomes single-toned and grave. The effect of the wilderness also obliterates the European settings of the story, which appear as impenetrable and mute as the wilderness towards the end of the story. This spell or the effect is shaken off by the director's final comment, but "a sinister resonance, a tonality of its own, a continued vibration [...] would hang in the air and dwell on the ear after the last note had been struck" (HOD, Author's note: 11).

³¹ This rather simple psychological device of hinting at something and not spelling it out completely, could account for the unabating popularity of the novella, which in many ways can be seen as a forerunner of psychological thriller-films (after all, every generation has something to imagine, something to project, something to spell out, etc.).

Conclusion

HOD is a novel of a monologic type. This is seen in the uniaxented narration and depiction of the characters, as well as in the monologically stated idea that formally shapes the text. However, Marlow's own monologic discourse is stratified from within first and foremost by apologetic/confessional discourse that Marlow adopts towards Kurtz and the harlequin. Marlow's own *Bildung* (and hence the autobiographical material) is realised through his relation to these two characters. To each of them Marlow has an ambivalent relation of fascination/repudiation. The harlequin realises Marlow's romantic naiveté, which Marlow finds nostalgically compelling but at the same time inadequate in the colonial epoch. Kurtz realises Marlow's ideological naiveté through his (Kurtz's) active and consequently self-degrading practising of unconditional superiority by setting himself up as a deity. The hyperbolised nature of these two characters works simultaneously as both a realisation of autobiographical material (i.e. the quintessence of the romantic and ideological naiveté) and as a device of narrative distancing (i.e. the extreme one-sidedness of these figures cannot resemble Marlow or any other "normal" person. Marlow's resolute detachment from both of these characters in the act of telling the story affects Marlow's discourse in such a way that it often sounds as self-glorifying, irreproachable and superior (i.e. Marlow lives up to his status of Buddha).

The figure of Kurtz is fundamentally ambivalent in that it works on two different levels, the intimate/personal and the ideological/political. Marlow's personal *Bildung* through Kurtz is marked by Marlow's deliberate voicing over of the naïve belief in one's superiority by the conscious affirmation of the other's humanity, but also through the evocations of selflessness and one's innate strength (this conscious affirmation takes place from the very beginning of the story). The ideological/political aspect of Kurtz is the result of materialisation of Kurtz-figure along the lines of liberal imperialism, which is the "religion" of the day. Kurtz-figure thus becomes the visual focus of the story in that it embodies the inconveyable imaginative effect of the colonial context and makes it somewhat, i.e. not entirely, intelligible to the audience by its concrete historical, liberal-imperial outlook. However, Kurtz's downfall cannot be read as categorically anti-imperialist, rather Marlow tries to voice the colonial context as a *potential* site for "the fascination of the abomination", for the extremity and subsequent horror. The story thus does not explore what redeems the idea of conquest, but rather what threatens it by making it inhuman and unacceptable.

However, we can puzzle out the right/human way of doing civilising work in the material disinterestedness and patient guiding/instructing which Marlow occasionally voices.

But Marlow's primary intention is to convey the effect of the wilderness on his own consciousness, which is combined with the idea of personal trial and becoming. Marlow's personal disillusionment (i.e. the overcoming of the romantic and ideological naiveté) through his exclusive experience in the colonial context (i.e. the extreme lawlessness of the Belgian Congo) makes it a very sophisticated type of autobiography, the genre that can help account for Marlow's direct, polemical and finally monologic discourse and its uncontested, signifying power. However, the elusive nature of Marlow's personal experiences and *Bildung* can only be conveyed by making the context of his experience concrete and tangible for the audience, but equally so for Marlow himself. Thus, the combination of autobiography with more factually-oriented, concrete description of Kurtz's downfall has resulted in an ambiguity that blurs the distinctiveness of each genre. The story thus embodies two separate but nevertheless inextricably linked dimensions, while it is only the narrator/the author who can see it bifocally (or if we too can imagine this two-sided dimension as a particular historico-geographical context that coincides with and partly also provokes the moment of personal development).

The two-dimensionality of Kurtz is also visible in the dialogising background that is simple and implicit during Marlow's journey upriver, the part in which Kurtz is just a voice. While following the unveiling of Kurtz's downfall the dialogising background becomes far more tangible and historically/intertextually complex (Marlow, as it were, pulls together all possible threads to weave the image of Kurtz as an imperialist par excellence). Significant here too is the fact that the harlequin-figure does not have the second, concrete-historical dimension as Kurtz has. This is because the romantic naiveté embodied in this character does not play any role in making the story intelligible to Marlow's auditors as Kurtz does. The harlequin's naiveté does not have any continuation in the adult life and is therefore left in its own world of pure adventure as something half-imaginary. Thus, whereas the overcoming of Kurtz has a broad, ideological significance and points to the future of Marlow's and his auditors' life, the harlequin has a deeply personal significance for the narrator himself (i.e. something not to be shared with others) and therefore points nostalgically backwards to his own youth.³²

³² Interestingly, Conrad writes in *Personal Record* that in 1868, when he was a nine year boy, he was looking at the map of Africa and promised himself to go there (HOD x). Marlow, in HOD, says the same about his own childhood. 1868 was the last year of six years long exile in Russia for Conrad and his father. Similarly, the harlequin Russian's annotations 'in cipher' in his only book, can be seen as the narrator's homage to the long-forgotten cyrillic alphabet that Conrad must have learnt during his stay in Russia and in which he might do his entries in the school atlas.

Furthermore, as we have seen in the analysis chapter, the rigidity of Marlow's audience makes him acquire an apologetic tone when affirming his late helmsman's humanity. This stands in contrast to the harlequin's affirmation of natives as ordinary and simple people as himself. This is a revealing instance not only of the ideological rigidity of Marlow's dialogising background, but at the same time also an instance of Marlow's shying away from the openly romantic pathos. As with the harlequin, Marlow also deposits the extreme, imperial pathos in the Kurtz-figure. This avoidance of extreme pathos and in-built in it naiveté contained in the two figures, allows Marlow the narrator to attain a position as a fundamentally irreproachable, Buddha-like hero. But the traces of apologetic and confessional discourse towards these two characters point, nevertheless, to the realisation of Marlow's original, autobiographical material. In this light, the inherently polemical tone of Marlow's discourse in HOD can be said to originate primarily from the opposition of his personal experiences to his audience and not from the opposition of the broadly politically/ideologically anti-imperialist ideas encapsulated in the Kurtz figure. Significant in this connection is the fact that Marlow's polemic with the audience takes place on the journey upriver when Kurtz is just a voice, that is, an imaginary temptation to see the wilderness as inferior and brute. Following the unveiling of Kurtz and his materialisation as a person, Marlow's polemical tone accordingly subsides. From this we can infer that what Marlow opposes is his own trial by the wilderness, the test of his own humanity and recognition of being weak and imperfect and not his views on the idea of imperialism and colonialism. What Marlow finds offensive (and hence polemical) is that his audience have not been forced to experience their own weaknesses, to peep into their own darkness as Marlow recognises to have done, but only through Kurtz, who, as argued earlier, by virtue of his imperial traits as a character blurs the personal/autobiographical dimension of the story and hence also works as a powerful narrative distancing device for the author.

Thus, as an adventure story, HOD realises both intimate/personal and more broad political/ideological aspects of its historical epoch. Each of these potentials is likely to be highlighted at different times in the history of reading,³³ but both are intricately and inextricably bound together and therefore are inseparable in the text. Marlow/Conrad has been successful in welding the two images together in one. Thus, in HOD the personal experiences determine the ideological/political ones and vice versa, which allows the story to powerfully convey the atmosphere of its epoch and its paradoxes (e.g. moral superiority vs. animalistic monstrosity; ideological superiority vs. personal weakness, etc.)

³³ As, for example, the extremely ideological perspective on Marlow's racism and imperialism adopted by postcolonial critics.

Finally, what also stratifies Marlow's monologic discourse from within is a combination of the literary language with the sailor jargon. We have seen that the introduction of the sailor jargon has to a certain extent "diluted" the abstract seriousness of the literary discourse and allowed for a more familiar tone of the narration. The deployment of the sailor jargon has also allowed for a more direct manner of articulating some abstract and sensitive matters, as well as to divert the auditors' attention from the polemic by focusing on the practical everyday reality. The skaz-oriented sailor jargon also allows for a harmonious integration of the yarn genre into the narrative, with its direct simplicity but also inherent entertaining value for Marlow and the auditors. All in all the sailor jargon serves to relativise and alleviate the intensity of Marlow's emphasis on the unreal and abstract nature, and therefore often makes Marlow's narrative voice sound more playful and lighter than the sombre theme actually allows. The harmonious combination of the two discourse types in one narrative voice can also be seen as a modernist innovation in literature on the par with Conrad's experimentation with unreliable narrators, late-decoding,³⁴ inconclusive endings, etc. (Peters 2006:31). And perhaps it is also the universality of Marlow's cleft tongue, with its combination of high and low points of view, that had earned Conrad an accolade from Henry James to be "the artist of the whole matter" (in Collits 2005:23).

But it is important to see these two discourse types as lying on two different planes and that they carry with them different points of view on the world. The distance between the two is quite palpable and is best seen in the passage that talks of a dog in the parody of breeches. But even though there is a distance between the two discourse types, their co-existence is sensed as natural by the narrator, so only a slight correction/affirmation is necessary in order to breach the existing distance.³⁵ However, in the modern, racism-sensitive world the difference between the two seems to disappear and Marlow's deliberate affirmation of the common but still inferior humanity is so obsolete that it looks like (and it is!) a racist insult. However, it is important to sense the difference between the two because the act of a conscious affirmation/breaching of this distance marks the

³⁴ In HOD the late-decoding device is employed in the passage that describes the attack on the steamer, where Marlow first sees sticks flying around and only some time later comprehends that they are arrows (Peters 2005: 55).

³⁵ We can try to understand why it is natural by taking a look at our own language and surrounding it heteroglossia, where the language, style and genres (jokes, anecdotes, etc.) are always rougher and more often than not still racist in the lower strata (e.g. work culture) as compared to the more politically correct language of educated people. But because we calibrate our language and our linguistic expectations when we meet people across the social/cultural/class strata, we can therefore always explain the context for their (racist/sexist) utterances by knowing about their social background and culture. In this light, there have no changes occurred in the heteroglot nature of language since Conrad's time. What has changed though is the dialogising background against which Conrad's images of the other are now perceived.

narrator's own Bildung, that is, his departure from even more gross and extreme ideological naiveté that was not very far from the horror of Kurtz.

Conrad is reported to have told one of his friends that "Before the Congo I was just a mere animal" (in Peters 2006:54). Well, the coming generations of readers will have to do adjustments for the remaining traces of his and his epoch's handicap.

Perspectives and Possibilities

HOD – Imperialism, the Question of 'Other' and Autobiography

I would like to offer here some reflections and ideas for which I could not find place within the main body of the thesis and those ideas that 'dawned' on me as an afterthought and therefore, I believe, will supplement my own analysis in new and productive ways.

HOD is a classic text and like any classic text it has a long and formidable tradition of its interpretation that has focused on many different aspects of the text, aspects that may not always be obvious to a common reader.³⁶ However, there are three themes that always reappear in most analyses of the novel. These themes are: imperialism, perception of the other and the autobiographical experiences of Conrad. There is a lot of controversy about how these three themes should be viewed in the novel, for example, whether Conrad is pro or against imperialism, whether he is on the side of the natives or not,³⁷ and finally if there is any connection between Conrad's own experiences and the actual story of HOD. But these three themes appear to be interconnected in that Conrad's relation to imperialism in HOD is determined by his particular autobiographical experiences, as well as his perception of the natives also belongs within the same frame of the author's Congo journey. So, my discussion of these themes belongs strictly within the confines of the text and are not generalisations about Conrad's stance on these matters expressed elsewhere in his authorship or life.

The discussion of the novella's attitude towards imperialism is complicated by the fact that while HOD definitely exposes a harsh critique of Belgian colonialism, the novel at the same time does not

³⁶ As, for example, the influence of Gauguin on Conrad, see Schwartz 2001.

³⁷ As Cederic Watts, a critic, has tried to persuade Chinua Achebe that Conrad is in reality on his side. To this Achebe responded that for him it is not about sides, but only about "one, *human*, side" (Achebe in Goonetilleke 2007: 61, original emphasis).

seem to question the idea of the imperial conquest itself. "The conquest of the earth", Marlow tells, "is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. [...] an unselfish belief in the idea" (HOD: 20). This statement is, of course, set in the ironic light, and it is this irony that, in my view, has influenced the reading of the novel as an anti-imperial manifesto, i.e., Kurtz's downfall has proved that there is no redeeming idea behind the conquest. However, I would like to argue that HOD *does* uphold the redeeming idea, but it does it indirectly by describing what can thwart the redeeming idea rather than it sets out to thwart/refute the idea itself. In this light, the figure of Kurtz should be seen as an omen, as the most powerful obstacle on the way of the proper imperial conquest, and not, as it is widely assumed, as a discarding of the idea itself. Indeed, it is very natural that HOD has been embraced by post-imperial critics as a very powerful anti-imperial critique. In my view, HOD *is* a powerful critique of imperialism, but it is not necessarily anti-imperial. As an imperial critique HOD is fundamentally constructive, that is, it is rather aimed at improving on the issue in question rather than at discarding it altogether. Thus, while the novel does try, on the one hand, to ascribe Kurtz a pan-European significance, Kurtz's downfall, on the other hand, is caused specifically by the rotten apparatus behind the Belgian imperial conquest. This seems to imply that Kurtz would not be able to go as far if he were working under the British rule. Therefore, the most significant anti-imperial critique (i.e. not narrowly Belgian, but of the idea of the imperial civilising mission itself) espoused by the novel is that the unlimited power entrusted to the coloniser is, more often than not, tends to dissipate into perversion if not exercised within the strict context of rules and guidelines that constitute the redeeming idea. The ambivalence of the novel on the issue of imperialism and the colonised other is (but this time seriously) resolved by Marlow's own words that I quoted above. The message is, as I will argue, is not to look into the idea too much but to carry it out selflessly. This is exactly what Marlow does in the act of revisiting his former experiences. He chooses to stick to work and to the patient instructing of his savage brothers. Kurtz, on the other hand, looks too much into the idea of cultural and civilisational superiority and as a consequence assumes himself as a selfish deity. This leads to the disintegration of the idea and of the European cultural values that generated the idea in the first place. Significantly, Marlow does not use the Kurtz-figure to discard imperialism. Rather Kurtz is important for Marlow/Conrad primarily because of his loss of the deliberate and uncompromising belief in oneself as a civilised man, the belief which constitutes the very fundament of imperialism. Thus, the horror, as it is understood in HOD, is the horror of losing this belief, of succumbing to one's animalistic instincts in the conducive context of utter lawlessness and wilderness.

Accordingly, as an antidote to darkness and horror Marlow is obsessed with finding meaning in the surface reality of work that allows him not to look too much into his long-forgotten, animalistic inner truth. Marlow's lie to the Intended can similarly be seen as a saving lie, exactly because it contributes to the keeping up of the civilised mask (Clifford 1988:99). Thus, in HOD the loss of one's civilised appearance also entails the loss of the redeeming idea behind imperialism – Kurtz's loss of restraint undermines the civilisational pretext of imperialism. The most important thing during the journey through the wilderness is thus not to lose oneself, to remain the way one is, because this is what makes the difference between the prehistoric man and the European. In this light Marlow resembles to the point Odysseus who tied himself to the mast and made his crew fill their ears with wax while sailing past the Sirens. The maxim of not losing oneself, of keeping up the necessary human facade, works at the same time to implement the imperial idea in the clinical, instrumental way. Indeed, what can be more pro-imperial than the emphasised necessity to keep one's civilised self intact while sticking to your fundamentally *imperial* work and as a result to be guarding the ideologically nurtured idea of conquest from any perverse and extreme thoughts that the wilderness may inflict upon you?

In other words, Marlow's encouragement to remain oneself despite any temptations by one's absolute power in relation to the natives is to remain within the strict ideological confines of the idea, the idea that has been soberly formulated back in Europe where there are no temptations of Kurtzian sort. The idea is therefore redeemed by a clinical/instrumental implementation, that is, by not looking too much into it.³⁸

In this light the horror of Kurtz cannot be seen as a refutation of the imperial idea, but rather as a warning, as an amendment to the imperial doctrine. This fundamental constructiveness of the Kurtz-figure is due to the fact that the horror in HOD is not countered by questioning of the inherent superiority and power of the colonisers, rather the novel seeks to restrain this power by admonishing selflessness and self-restraint. Basic assumption here is that any fundamental imperial critique is impossible without the full recognition of the other's alterity, that is, his/her meaningfully different and valuable existence. Marlow's/Conrad's superficial knowledge of the other has thus not allowed him to question the most important source of horror – the asymmetric relationship of power between the coloniser and the colonised. This is despite Marlow's recognition of what essentially tempts Kurtz to exceed his moral judgments is exactly his view of the other as inferior, in relation to whom he, Kurtz, may act as an almighty God. As a result of Marlow's

³⁸ Compare, for example, Marlow's instrumental view of the helmsman in the story. See the analysis.

emphasis on restraint instead of on the imperial ideology, Kurtz's horror appears as a self-inflicted failure, a sign of Kurtz's own lack of restraint and selfishness. In this light the solution to keep oneself from violent outbreaks á la "Exterminate all the brutes!" means, according to HOD, to constantly restrain and monitor oneself, i.e. to use one's superior power instrumentally and not militantly. Once again the allegorical tying oneself to the mast by the deliberate belief and pushing on unchanged and firm is to be preferred to the revision of the belief itself. In other words, Marlow/Conrad tries to cure the symptom rather than curing the illness itself. It is this insight that allows us, in my view, to puzzle out Conrad's attitude to the imperialism in HOD, the attitude that was succinctly verbalised by another colonial official, contemporary of Conrad: "The African is indeed my brother but my junior brother" (Schweitzer in Achebe 1988: 7).

I see the confusion of taking the Kurtz-figure as an instance of a radical anti-imperial critique in the fact that Conrad, as I tried to argue in my analysis, set out to describe through Kurtz the impact of the wilderness on his own psyche and personality, the experience that in the end had to be rendered intelligible by giving Kurtz recognisable imperialistic traits. This elusive but amply accentuated trial by the wilderness that is described in the journey upriver part (the part that comes between the atrocious colonialism of the Belgians and the brutalities of Kurtz), tends to disappear in many analysis and as a result Kurtz gets narrowly hooked up to the criminalities of the coast, which Marlow/Conrad caustically repudiates. But even though Kurtz's 'fascination of the abomination' is directly conditioned by the general lawlessness in the Belgian colony, his downfall is, nevertheless, caused by other forces, fundamentally different from those of the coast. Kurtz, as mentioned, believes in the idea to the extent that he himself becomes the embodiment of the idea instead of being its impartial implementer and, as a result, he sacrifices himself and others for its sake. The pilgrims, on the contrary, do not believe in anything but money and their mean and abusive treatment of the natives reflects only their fundamentally mean treatment of each other.³⁹ Thus, whereas Kurtz oversteps the boundary and recognises its horror, the pilgrims continue to live in the slighter but nevertheless constant horror of abuse and subjugation without being aware of it, i.e. they deem it normal. So, in my view it is a mistake to lump Kurtz together with the pilgrims and thereby argue for the anti-imperial message of the novel. Marlow's confessional and apologetic tones on Kurtz's behalf rather suggest that it is indeed difficult for one not to overstep the boundary of the legitimate and moral in the extreme and uncongenial environment of the jungle, the

³⁹ E.g. the company's accountant's grunting at the noises made by a dying agent in his hut.

temptation that is additionally aggravated by the overarching lawlessness and impunity implicitly and explicitly inherent in the imperial ideology in general and in the Belgian Congo in particular. Accordingly, Marlow's polemic with his auditors is grounded specifically in the fact that everybody 'out there' - in the colonies is subjected to the trial by the wilderness, but everybody to different degrees and in different ways. Thus, while the narrowly materialist aspirations of the pilgrims are unmasked as rudimentarily greedy and mean, the extreme nobleness of Kurtz, on the other hand, is only matched by his equally extreme brutality. Marlow's personal confession through Kurtz, in my view, is the most important driving force of the narrative (its autobiographical drama), cannot be taken as an anti-imperial statement, but at best is intended as a warning, i.e. the darkness as a potential but not an integral/unavoidable part of imperialism in general. Herein also lies the difference of light imagery employed to describe the two imperial cities – while Belgian Brussels looks like sepulchre (i.e. the integral darkness of the *specifically* Belgian imperialism), London has a mournful gloom hanging over it (i.e. the *potential* darkness in the British imperial mission).⁴⁰

In my opinion, a better understanding of the effect of the colonial context enriches not only our understanding of the novel's meaning and the particularity of its historical epoch, but can also be helpful in explaining what motivated the author in the first place to write the story. In the following I would like therefore to focus on the nature and the effect of Marlow's experience and how this perspective can help produce a new interpretation of the story's ending episode.

Bronislaw Malinowski, a famous Polish-born anthropologist and an acquaintance of Conrad, wrote in his private field diary (unpublished until 1967) about his Trobriand informants who not always were all too willing to cooperate with him: "At moments I was furious at them, particularly because after I gave them their portions of tobacco they all went away. On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to 'Exterminate the brutes'" (Quoted in Clifford 1988: 105). Like Kurtz who, if denied his way, is easy to succumb to the ruthless and unscrupulous reinstatement of his authority, so too Malinowski flirts with the idea of using physical power to get things his way. Each is tempted to enforce their power on the other in order to achieve selfish goals: for Kurtz it is ivory and recognition, for Malinowski it is the empirical data that will secure his scientific career back in England. This fundamental selfishness of man can be successfully conceptualised by

⁴⁰ Conrad is held to be an anti-imperialist writer. But this anti-imperialism is, in my view, does not come to the fore in HOD. However, by pointing to the potential for darkness inherent in the imperial mission, HOD can be seen as a fundament for the writer's further, more negative views on imperialism in his subsequent works. But in HOD the critique of imperialism is negative only to the extent where its implementation makes one lose one's humanity and therefore should be discarded or re-considered. The message is thus rather clear: the civilising mission is legitimate to the extent where it does not undermine its own civilisation. This criterion may be a secure antidote against brutality and horror, but at the same time it justifies the rigidly paternalistic attitude toward the colonised other.

Schopenhauer's notion of 'will' as "an irrational blind, insatiable force without conscious purpose or direction which is the very source of man's conduct" (in Panagopoulos 1998: 13). The colonial context, without its European legal and ethical constraints on the European individual, can accordingly be seen as conducive for releasing the will and thereby to unveil his other, brutal and selfish face. From this perspective we can say that there are two different truths in HOD, one is colonial while the other is European. In this light HOD appears as a story that tries to voice the fundamental discrepancy between the two different contexts, between the two ultimately different truths of man.⁴¹ Marlow's experience of darkness through Kurtz has allowed him to poise on the boundary between these two different truths of man - noble and brutal. Marlow, as we hear towards the end of the story, is a man who has peeped into his own darkness through Kurtz, but who has also been allowed to draw back his hesitating foot. And it is this second, horror-ridden truth, as I argued in my thesis, that constitutes the incommunicable experience of Marlow the full significance of which he can neither convey to his audience nor to Kurtz's Intended. It is impossible for people in Europe to conceive to what radical degree a man can change from what he is to what he may become. Marlow's, Kurtz's and Conrad's is a radical kind of experience similar to war experience of a soldier. Such type of experience not only cannot be adequately communicated to the stay-at-home ones, but this kind of experience is also very reluctantly talked about. Furthermore, more often than not it is not the soldiers or, say, Holocaust victims themselves, who can find that necessary psychological detachment to write about their own experiences, but it is generally the succeeding generations, their children and grand children who try to voice the experiences of their parents and grandparents. Similarly, it took Conrad eight years to distance himself from his own experiences in Congo, and even when he wrote them down he chose a semi-fictitious genre in which he is not the one who directly experiences the power of darkness, but he does it indirectly, through Marlow and Kurtz. This is, in my view, because unlike the war experience, which is after all a collective experience that affects more or less directly the whole society, Conrad's own experience in Congo was exclusive, intimate and ultimately separated from the metropolitan culture. And it is precisely this happy ignorance of the public that arouses Marlow's indignation after his return from the wilderness:

I found myself back in the sepulchral city *resenting* the sight of people hurrying through the streets to flinch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant

⁴¹ I owe the insight of Marlow's awareness of necessary truths and lies in HOD to James Clifford and his interesting and inspiring discussion of the similarities in the lives of the two prominent expatriate Poles, Conrad and Malinowski.

Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness through a Dialogic Lens

silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was *offensive* to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces, so full of stupid importance. I daresay I was not very well at that time (HOD: 114, my italics).

Once Marlow is back in Europe he has to don back the mask of the commonplace individual and to act as if everything is fine. The other, colonial face should be covered amongst these people. But this paragraph, in its open sincerity, also points to the gravity and deep impression the original journey had made on Marlow/Conrad, the impression that is otherwise voiced over by the detached narrative voice in the actual act of telling the story. For example, Marlow's cool and unimpressed descriptions of the heads on stakes around Kurtz's hut and of other forms of colonial brutality, are as if unconsciously 'corrected' in this passage that betrays the emotional impact of the journey.

Marlow is reluctant in his "desire to enlighten" others about his own experience, but it is also the impossibility of communicating this fundamentally different experience that motivates Marlow to tell the saving lie to the Intended. The colonial horror as well as any other horror cannot be told about, but only experienced, lived through. But whereas Marlow's lie to the Intended is for her own sake as well as for the sake of Kurtz's friends and colleagues (whom Marlow deceives in exactly the same way, but by tearing off the infamous postscript "Exterminate all the brutes!"), Marlow's lie to his own aunt is more for his own sake. Olof Lagercrantz quite perceptively pointed out the possibility of seeing the Intended as Marlow's aunt (Lagercrantz 1989: 158). But whereas Lagercrantz offers us to read both women as the potential Heart of Darkness, i.e. those who sent both Marlow and Kurtz to lose themselves in the wilderness (Ibid.), I would like instead to offer a more biographical reading, reading that I have tried to argue for in my thesis. Autobiographically speaking, the first person to whom Conrad returns after his voyage is his own aunt, but can he tell her about the full impact the journey had had on his personality, about his own experiences, some of which might even undermine her perception of him? The silencing of horror can be regarded as both a psychological defence, but also as a lie, i.e. the lacking admission to have erred (even if only by losing one's composure like Malinowski). But Marlow and Conrad abhor lies, so the telling of the story eight years later is necessary to redeem this silence/lie, to utter the horror and one's experience of it. But even this distance is not enough, as mentioned, for Conrad to assume the central place in his own narrative and utter the words "the horror" unmediatedly. He does it through

Kurtz with whom he does not share imperial ambitions, but only, and most significantly, the intimate understanding of the “fascination of the abomination” and inherent in it horror. As mentioned earlier, Marlow's apologetic and confessional tones towards Kurtz seem to support this reading.

Conrad once explained his working method to William Blackwood, his publisher, by referring specifically to HOD, “that in the light of the last episode the whole story in all its descriptive details will fall into place – achieve its value and meaning” (in Lagercrantz 1989:157, my translation). The difficulty of pronouncing Kurtz' final words to his Intended, but their ultimate pronouncement to the reader (both women and men alike, as well as indirectly to Conrad's own aunt), is what, in my view, makes the story fall into place, i.e. redeems the original lie or silencing that has motivated the telling of the story in the first place.⁴²

In conclusion I would like to say a few words about the problematic status of the novella in our time. The postcolonial era that followed after the collapse of the European Empires in the second half of the 20th century with formerly colonised nations breaking free from under the imperial yoke, has also sharpened the antagonism between the metropolitan centre and its former colonial peripheries. Imperial literature has become one of the most significant battlefields over the new, postcolonial identity. Postcolonial writers began to write against the canonical imperial texts and their oftentimes degrading portrayals of the colonised cultures and peoples. HOD is a text that, as I mentioned in the introduction, has produced a lot of controversy because of its racist images of Africans. The status of the novel is thus divided between great and abominable. For instance, James Clifford has argued that Conrad's writing in HOD is a quintessential example of ethnographic subjectivity, this is because of the author's awareness of the relativity of truth and experience that lies at the heart of the narrative (Clifford 1988: 97). Thus, from the European, ethnocentric perspective the worth of HOD lies in its “lending” of fresh “eyes” on the imperial culture by describing how it is perceived from outside and what its shortcomings are. While from the inter-cultural perspective the value of the novel is as much as none, because it portrays the other (African) culture very superficially and reified. Conrad was not able to lend Africa his otherness nor, as a result, could he borrow African otherness onto himself and his European culture. Hence

⁴² Most of Conrad's biographers and critics point out the significance of HOD as a frontier novel in Conrad's literary career, that is, as a novel that has initiated the most significant and productive (also called middle) period in his authorship. Conrad himself confessed on different occasions that the story “was growing on him” or that it “appeared like a genie from the bottle” (see Conrad's Middle Period in Peters 2006), confessions to which the hasty process of writing the story down seems to testify. In this light the importance of the personal, psychologically-cathartic element of the novella should not be underestimated or simply overruled by the imperial-ideological perspective on the text. This element makes HOD a fictitious autobiography.

the critique of the imperial ideology in HOD is fundamentally constructive (i.e. looking for improvement from within) and not destructive (i.e. through the full recognition and knowing of the other that nullifies the idea of conquest). Furthermore, the strong undercurrents of nihilism and hopelessness in the novel can also be said to stem from the lack of valid otherness – in HOD Marlow is trapped between, on the one hand, his repulsion towards colonisers (extreme parody), and his half-hearted recognition of the colonised other's rudimentary humanity, on the other. Drawing once again on Bakhtin, we could say (but culturally speaking only) that Conrad in HOD was looking into the mirror rather than allowing the other to paint a picture of him and of his culture and therefore like an auto-portrait it has remained one-dimensional (for we are consummated as persons only from outside, through the eyes of others).⁴³

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Abstract

The main objective of the thesis is to apply Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on the dialogic nature of language to an analysis of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Bakhtin has developed his theory of the novel on the basis of his ideas on a fundamentally dialogic nature of both spoken and written language. Novel as a genre, according to Bakhtin, is best to capture and convey the dialog of one's epoch due to the genre's inherent plasticity to incorporate new literary and extra-literary genres into its textual fabric. Bakhtin thus differentiates between two different types of novelistic genres – monologic and dialogic, which are also paralleled and supplemented respectively by designations monoglot and heteroglot. Monologic novels express the authorial speech onto the world (i.e. monologue), speech that is expressed by means of one language, one speech (i.e. monoglossia). Dialogic novels, on the other hand, strive to convey the voices of their historical epochs (i.e. their ongoing dialogue), voices that each carries its own language and hence also socio-ideologically different speech (heteroglossia). Heteroglossia becomes thus a central concept in Bakhtin's theory of the novel because it is precisely the text's relation to the heteroglossia of its epoch (i.e. to the always-present social voices/languages) that determines the nature of discourse in the text.⁴⁴ The starting point for the analysis has therefore been to identify how discourse is structured throughout the text by looking at its relation to the heteroglot dialogising background both outside (i.e. historical epoch) and inside the text (the fictitious setting).

In my application of Bakhtin to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* I differentiate between two different parts of the novel's formal and ideological organisation. In the novel's first part, Marlow's British

⁴⁴ Discourse in Bakhtin is understood primarily as a particular use of language within different environments of speech. Hence the true novelistic discourse is, according to Bakhtin, always dialogic and heteroglot (i.e. because there is not just one language, one style, one view, etc.).

audience forms a conducive dialogical background for Marlow's sarcastic tone and descriptions of the Belgian colonial rule in Congo. In the second part, the part that initiates the journey upriver, the role of Marlow's audience radically changes from being spectators in Marlow's ridiculing of the Belgians to the direct participants and objects of Marlow's polemic. This shift in, what Bakhtin terms, form-shaping ideology that organises the two parts of the narrative has also effected a radical change in Marlow's discourse from being sarcastic to acquiring overtly polemical tones. Furthermore, I distinguish between two distinct languages/discourse types deployed by Marlow while narrating the story of his journey upriver to get Kurtz. Marlow speaks with what I call cleft tongue, that is, his use, on the one hand, of the distinctly literary language characterised by long and abstract sentences and, on the other hand, the sailor jargon with its more casual, skaz-oriented speech. Both discourse types appear to coincide with the genres that are conducive for their expression. Thus, Marlow's polemical statements of Darwinism-inspired ideas on the common humanity between Europeans and Africans are expressed through the medium of lofty and abstract literary language. This is while the sailor jargon is employed to describe the immediate, practical matters as well as for the narration of the inserted, skaz-oriented genres of tall tale and yarn. Both of these discourse types and conducive for their expression genres are, despite the ideological and formal differences inherent in them, are subjected to one authorial accent. Both the interrelation and a slight tension between the two discourse types is visible in the part of the story that describes the journey upriver, which, in my opinion, forms the ideological nucleus of the story. The journey upriver is structured as a classic adventure story with inherent in it idea of trial and becoming (*Bildung*) of the main hero, which also becomes, polemically, the trial of the audience. The discourse in this part (and distinctly from the other parts of the story) is polemically directed at its dialogising background (i.e. Marlow's audience). As the journey progresses we can see the development of Marlow's polemic with the audience from being latent and half-serious to overt and aggressive. The figure of Kurtz is thus seen not only as a climax of the adventure (i.e. the discovery of the mystery), but equally so as the last, decisive argument in Marlow's polemic. In this connection I also look at the changing role played by the two discourse types in Marlow's polemic, where, for example, the sailor jargon may be both used as a straightforward communicative medium for Marlow's abstract ideas but also as an escape from an argument that both emotionally and rhetorically blocks the further narration of the story. The image of the colonial 'other' in the story is also discussed from the perspective of the two different and at times conflicting ways of portrayal and perception inherent in the two discourse types. Thus, whereas the literary language with its

scientifically enlightened arguments tries to affirm the basic humanity of the colonised other, the sailor jargon with its rough and rather base perception of the other seems only to undermine it. However, the narrator appears to be conscious of the existing tension between the two discourse types, tension that may seem to undermine his polemic with the audience, and as a result the humanity of the other is in the end deliberately, if somewhat artificially, affirmed.

In the sixth chapter I discuss the role of the harlequin figure in the narrative by borrowing, to start with, Bakhtin's observations about three distinct functions such figure has performed in the history of literature. The harlequin in HOD performs the function of "naïve incomprehension" that powerfully contrasts the greed of the pilgrims and the moral downfall of Kurtz. But I also argue that the harlequin figure realises the romantic naiveté of the younger Marlow, that is, Marlow who originally made the journey up the Congo river. I look at the similarities of both harlequin and Marlow's relation to Kurtz, relation that is ambivalently marked by fascination/repudiation towards Kurtz. For both Marlow and the harlequin Kurtz is a frontier, the transgression of which I see as a loss of ideological and romantic naiveté respectively.

In the seventh chapter I offer a provisional interpretation of the story's ending, in which I see Marlow's conversation with Kurtz's Intended as a recapitulation of the significant parts of Marlow's experience and the difficulty of communicating it to his male audience whose conservatism is metaphorically embodied in Marlow's talk with the Intended who, like Marlow's male audience, lives in her beautiful world. The figure of Kurtz, due to its extremity, is discussed as a catalyst of the imperial epoch that exposes its potential moral and ideological dead end.

In the eighth chapter I discuss the findings and identify, on the basis of Marlow's confessional and apologetic tones towards Kurtz, a strong autobiographical strand that runs through the novel and that is decisive for understanding of some of the story's inherent ambivalences. I argue that the figure of Kurtz is fundamentally two-sided, in that, on the one hand, it realises some of Conrad's particular autobiographical experiences, experiences that are, on the other hand, rendered somewhat intelligible to Marlow's/Conrad's audience through the more tangible imperialist traits of the Kurtz-figure. I argue that Marlow's polemical tone in HOD originates from his personal experiences and from his own trial by the wilderness and not from the ideological views on the doctrine of imperialism and colonialism in general. Hence the primary significance of the Kurtz-figure in HOD is as a voice, as an instance of a particular colonial imagination rather than as an explicit imperialist figure whose tangible historical features serve the purpose of making Marlow's experiences more intelligible to his home audience.

In the ninth chapter I conclude by looking at all those aspects that stratify Marlow's monologic narrative voice from within. While Marlow's discourse is monologically (and hence polemically) dialogised against the invisible background of Marlow's audience, Marlow's own discourse is stratified from within by apologetic/confessional tones towards Kurtz and the harlequin. Both of these characters represent quintessential embodiments of respectively ideological and romantic naiveté from which Marlow distances himself but which fascinate him too. The inherent signifying power of Marlow's monologic narrative voice is located between these two types of naiveté (i.e. as Marlow's Buddha-like transgression of them), whereas Marlow's apologetic and confessional tones towards Kurtz and the harlequin are seen as the traces of autobiographical material incorporated into the story (i.e. as Marlow's/Conrad's original naiveté).

Marlow's monologic discourse is also stratified from within by Marlow's inherently cleft tongue (i.e. use of literary and sailor jargon) and related to them genres of expression, e.g. statement of the scientific idea and inserted genres of tall tale/yarn. Marlow's statement of the idea of the common humanity, when undermined by sailor jargon, is subsequently deliberately affirmed. This affirmation is what marks the narrator's own *Bildung*, i.e. his awareness of the destructive potential in the view of the colonised other as inferior. However, this affirmation does not amount to more than an instrumental view of the other's humanity, i.e. the view that allows avoiding the horror of murder as a potential consequence of the colonial ideology of superiority, but at the same time this view is insufficient to achieve a full recognition of the other's equal humanity and cultural worth.

In the epilogue I shortly address three recurrent aspects in general reading of HOD: Marlow's/Conrad's relation to imperialism, the question of the colonial 'other' and the influence of autobiography on the text by looking at the final episode of the story: Marlow's conversation with Kurtz's Intended.