

In Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness, colonialism is thoroughly explored as it is able to link in with the human interactions alongside the nature in the story. Based off of Conrad's real life experience in the Congo, it is suggested that the protagonist Marlow is indeed the author himself, who experiences the land transform and colonise. He is a sympathetic character who romanticises the "old river" and the "tranquil dignity of a waterway". Throughout the novella, gentle words are used to describe the nature surrounding Marlow, as well as to describe the death of his fellow ship mates. As Kurtz passes away on board the steamer, he reminisces about his existence and how he "presented himself as a voice". This later affects Mrs. Kurtz as her "low voice" was present with "desolation and sorrow". Conrad incorporates many descriptive words in order to show readers the dramatisation of death. He also uses gentle and romantic words to highlight the surrounding nature and the brooding force of the Eurocentric minds that come to destroy it.

Marlow admires the sea thoroughly, and is subject to drift into a day-dream state when conversing to himself about the sea and its mysteriousness. He acknowledges it as a place where Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Franklin had conquered it, along with the abandoned ships of the Erebus and Terror. At the time Conrad was a young boy, many places on the map were deemed as undiscovered. This key moment in the text is important as it shows readers the desire to colonise from the standpoint of an important yet stable character. "The seed of commonwealths" and "germs of empires" have been developed all due to the sea. The sea, a part of Nature, poses as an important secondary character in the novella. Conrad also hints an admiration for females as "often the torch" is lifted from the "sacred fire". From the standpoint of a European imperialist, conquering the sea is admired and its "crowded" memories too. He uses metaphorical language to further romanticise the overall image of the sea and its wonders.

Furthermore, it is hinted amongst the novella that Marlow is blind to his own racism. He describes the Helmsman's death as "brooding" but also emphasises his "menacing expression" and "black death-mask". Conrad questions the suddenness of death and often changes his reaction based on race. Kurtz's death is idolised and more emphasised as it is discussed for a longer period of time. The Helmsman's death is described for a shorter period of time and discusses more so the state of his corpse as it transitions into a "vacant glassiness" rather than the "gifted creature" Kurtz was. Although not particularly admired by Marlow, Kurtz still received a more heart felt description rather than a "Can you steer?" being followed seconds from the Helmsman's death. This suggests that Conrad gave more sympathy for deluded and civilised men, as opposed to being a back male with the ability to steer a steam boat. It is suggested however that because of the time it was written in, it was common for racism to occur.