

crawling to real wilderness or, more accurately, the package of meanings pasted upon Africa by European need and fear of a wild

Other the point is Kurtz steps from his culture's context and allies himself with the alterative order of nature. Second, the contest between Marlow and Kurtz emphasizes nature's power as a shaping context. Marlow says, "I tried to break the spell, the heavy mute spell of the wilderness" (65).

Kurtz lives deep ecology's premise that there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence," and that instead of the old "man-in-environment" paradigm, identity-is constructed by a relational field. Marlow is him-self tempted toward this recognition as he pursues Kurtz his fevered mind wanders into insight, "I saw a row of pilgrims squirting lead in the air out of Winchesters . . . I thought it would never get back to the steamer and imagined myself living alone and unarmed in the woods to an advanced age" (64).

The terms of Kurtz's bewitching reveal that Kurtz has conceived of himself as identified with nature, and that recognizing humanity's ontological situation as part of nature has made Kurtz peculiarly attractive and threatening to Marlow as he himself chooses between the nightmares of imperial abuse and Kurtzian abandon.