**Dr. S. CHOUCHANE**

**3rd Year Literature Module**

**Academic Year: 2024/2025**

**Modernist Aspects in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart* *of Darkness* (1899)**

1. **Narrator**: use of subjective narrators (he rejected the narrative omniscience), 1st person narrators.

Narrator is introspective and uncertain about the meaning of his narrative (e.g. Marlow's 1st-person participant narration presents a limited point-of-view: Marlow does not know, and does not pretend to know, all the answers in his increasingly uncertain and demoralized world).

Framed Narrative

* 1. Narrator begins
  2. Marlow takes over
  3. Narrator breaks in occasionally

1. **Fragmentation**

* Narrative structure is untraditional, discontinuous and fragmented
* Memory of the past (flashbacks), the present, and the future (flash-forwards), rather than a traditional linear (i.e. chronological beginning-middle-end) logic narrative.

1. **Stream of consciousness and interior monologue**
2. **Pessimism**
3. **Open ending**: The absence of resolution for a complex character
4. **Irony**: the ending
5. **Reader**: the novella’s ambiguity and fascinating complexity opens new sides for reader while reading

Ex: **Different interpretations (contradiction)**

* Some feel the novel is an attack on colonialist ideology, others feel the novel celebrates and defends colonization and racism.
* Some see Kurtz as the embodiment of all the evil and horror of capitalist society.

Others view it as a portrayal of one man’s journey into the primitive unconscious where one must confront one’s own inner darkness.

* Still others see it as a modern journey quest, perhaps with an anti-hero rather than a hero.

Deals with issues of the day, including

1. **Psychology**: Familiar with Freudian theories, Conrad voices his interest in the problems of the Empire and imperialism as a starting point for his investigation of the nature of man’s relation to himself and to the other.
2. **Form:** it has such a great **complexity of organization** and is perceived as a philosophical novel that gives an opportunity to directly opposite and mutually exclusive readings.
3. **Meanings of imagery and symbolism are often untraditional** and individual to the literary work, and patterns must be worked out by the reader (e.g. traditional meanings of  light and dark, white and black are reversed in *Heart of Darkness*)
4. Conrad’s Heart of Darkness raises a number of issues relating to the advent of the new era, characterized by relativity, instability, lack of a shared sense of public value.