**Dr. S. CHOUCHANE**

**3rd Year Literature Module**

**Academic Year: 2024/2025**

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

**The horror! The horror!**

This phrase is found in Joseph Conrad’s *“Heart of Darkness.”* This is the final judgment of Kurtz on his own life, actions, and generally on humankind and imperialism. (what monster he has become)

* Generally, it implies the horror Kurtz witnesses in Africa, though the horror could be the exploitation of Africa, evil practices of humans, his crumbling sanity, or an illusion of understanding and hope. Simply, **it conveys what the West did during colonization in the name of progress, and under the guise of civilizing the natives.** Darkness prevails when he dies, symbolizing that his actions were evil. Thus, it is Kurtz’s realization of the bitter and absolute truth of his life.
* Contrast between professional duties v/s personal feelings

**Characters**: solitary heroes viewed externally through their actions

**Structure:** a series of stories narrated by Marlow (an observer –narrator) on board

* Minor characters also tell their own stories and views of Kurtz
* Continuous shifts backwards and forwards
* Suspense
* Psychological realism

**Language**: Conrad made use of an amazing variety of adjectives and complex structures. His

dialogues are characterized by idiomatic expressions, questions and exclamations, dashes and

interjections

**Symbolism:** The novel is rich in imagery

* Parallels (Thames & Congo, Marlow & Kurtz)
* Symbols (traditional meanings are subverted)
* Oppositions (light and dark, white and black)

**Interpretation:** a quest for the self.

**KURTZ once taken beyond the limits of his heart, suffered madness & died MARLOW did not transgress his limits, he resisted in spite of the heart of darkness fascination and came back without fully understanding his experience**

**Civilization**

* Jungle drives white men crazy
* There is only death- the death of goodness and civility
* The expedition Marlow arranged to bring Kurtz back to civilization

**Time**: end of the 19th century