

# Colleen Burke

## Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

### A Metaphor of Jungian Psychology

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#### Acknowledgment and Dedication

*In 1961, Richard Verreault, who had been denied tenure as an English professor at a local university, joined the faculty of our ill-litigated -- if not illiterate -- high school and, with probing short story assignments, opened an unknown world to an unconscious sophomore. My imagination danced in the pages of Joyce, Faulkner, and Steinbeck, but crashed into the unknown -- and presumably unknowable -- with our Heart of Darkness assignment.*

*We were to journey to the dark underworld of Conrad's Congo and bring back an understanding of "The Horror! The Horror!" In spite of Mr. Verreault's ever present encouragement and my A's on most papers, I received only a B (it was actually a B- with the minus crossed off) on the Heart of Darkness paper and I still feel, thirty-four years later, that I failed to answer the question posed by my literary psychopomp, Mr. Verreault. What does a fifteen year old (at least in rural, upstate New York in 1961) know about the darkly savage shadows of that deep interior place?*

*The moment we received our Mythological Studies assignment for Jungian Depth Psychology, I knew I would re-enter the dark continent and, through my own untenured lenses, hopefully pay tribute to the memory of Richard Verreault -- and perhaps to my own individuation journey.*

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As the *Heart of Darkness* snakes its way into the savage shadows of the African continent, Joseph Conrad exposes a psycho-geography of the collective unconscious in the entangling metaphoric realities of the serpentine Congo. Conrad's novella descends into the unknowable darkness at the heart of Africa, taking its narrator, Marlow, on an underworld journey of individuation, a modern odyssey toward the center of the Self and the center of the Earth. Ego dissolves into soul as, in the interior, Marlow encounters his double in the powerful image of ivory-obsessed Kurtz, the dark shadow of European imperialism. The dark meditation is graced by personifications of anima in Kurtz' black goddess, the savagely magnificent consort of the underworld, and in his porcelain-skinned Persephone, Kurt's innocent Intended of the upperworld. Though "Dr. Jung's discoveries were not known to Conrad," (Hayes, 43) who wrote this master work between 1898 and 1899, *Heart of Darkness* presents a literary metaphor of Jungian psychology.

This paper explores the dark territory of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as metaphor for the Jungian concepts of the personal and the collective unconscious, as a journey of individuation, a meeting with the anima, an encounter with the shadow, and a descent into the mythic underworld. Like Conrad's Marlow, who is propelled toward his African destiny despite ample warning and foreboding, I have been drawn beyond the classic analysis of the *Heart of Darkness*, embarking down an uncharted tributary, scouting parallels between Marlow's tale and Jung's own journeys to Africa, and seeking murky insight into the physical and the metaphorical impact of the dark continent on the language and the landscape of depth psychology.

“Africa,” wrote Graham Greene, “will always be the Africa in the Victorian atlas, the blank unexplored continent in the shape of the human heart.” The African heart described by Greene “acquired a new layer of meaning when Conrad portrayed the Congo under King Leopold as the *Heart of Darkness*, a place where barbarism triumphs over humanity, nature over technology, biology over culture, id over super ego” (McLynn, ix).

The unknown and uncharted topography of the African continent first beckoned Conrad’s narrator, Marlow, into its depths in his boyhood: “Now, when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration” (Conrad, 5). When Marlow was grown and Africa was no longer a blank space on the map, but rather “a place of darkness,” there was still one river there that drew him especially, “a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land” (Conrad, 5-6). This same deep place that had seduced Conrad’s ivory hunting Kurtz into the horrors of its savage embrace had, in 1890, lured Conrad himself into adventure that turned him from sailor to writer (Smith, 25) and severely effected his health for the rest of his life (Conrad, v). As the voyage up the Congo proved fateful for the development of Conrad’s narrator, Marlow, it was equally fateful for Conrad’s individuation, as he reflects in his letters “Before the Congo I was just a mere animal.” (Jean-Aubrey, 141)

Hillman, in “Notes on White Supremacy” reminds us that, like Conrad, both Freud and Jung were called to venture into the shadowed continent and vestiges of their journeys still color our psychological language:

The convention informing geographical discoveries and the expansion of white consciousness over Africa continue to inform psychic geography. The topological language used by Freud for “the unconscious” as a place below, different, timeless, primordial, libidinal and separated from the conscious-ness recapitulates what white reporters centuries earlier said about West Africa. From Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to van der Post’s *Venture to the Interior*, Africa and the unconscious allegorize the other place.... “Just don’t stay in the topical colonies too long; you must reign at home,” writes Freud in 1911 to Jung, who himself made the African journey fourteen years later, describing the vast lands and dark peoples he encountered in language he applies as well to the immemorial unconscious psyche.... Part of psychology’s myth is that the unconscious was “discovered” as its contents are “explored” (45).

Thus Africa has become a topology of the mind -- its location, its shape, its cultures, its textures, its rhythms, its foliage, its hues, its wildness -- all calling forth something lost in the psychology of the white European. It is with an understanding of our destiny to explore that symbolic lost continent within ourselves that we can begin to appreciate the prescience of Jungian psychology in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

While the allegorizing of the African continent with the darkness of its instinctual, shadowed, primeval underworld establishes a revealing context for an examination of the Jungian concepts in the *Heart of Darkness* (the assignment which will be undertaken shortly), I am drawn first to explore an uncharted literary tributary, tracking the striking similarities between Jung’s reflections on his trips to the dark continent (North Africa in 1920 and to Kenya and Uganda in 1925) and the tale told by Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* published in 1902. Jung himself in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* concludes that his dreams while he was in Africa “seemed to say that they considered ... the African journey not as something real, but rather as a symptomatic or symbolic act” (272) and it is this sense of the symbolic in Jung’s travels to Africa that can be juxtaposed to the symbolic in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Jung’s reflective entries on his African travels in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* repeatedly echo Marlow’s narrative on topics from the reason for setting forth in the first place to the expectations of inner change, from the experience of primordial time to the encounter with wildness and the recognition of personified shadow.

The *Heart of Darkness* tells the story of a night sea journey of exploration and self discovery of its narrator, Marlow, a European able to see himself and “civilization” more clearly against the dark backdrop of the center of the earth. Similarly, through a dream he had at the end of his first visit to Northern Africa, Jung recognized

his first travels to Africa as an opportunity to discover a lost aspect of the self, his invisible and unconscious parts. In *Memories Dreams, Reflections*, Jung analyzes his dream:

In traveling to Africa to find a psychic observation post outside the sphere of the European, I unconsciously wanted to find that part of my personality which had become invisible under the influence and the pressure of being European. This part stands in unconscious opposition to myself, and indeed I attempt to suppress it. In keeping with its nature, it wishes to make me unconscious...so as to kill me; but my aim is, through insight, to make it more conscious...(244).

Jung's analysis of this dream in which there was a dark Arab aristocrat provides even deeper insight into the impact his travels had on his work. Opening the possibility of a collective shadow, Jung writes,

The Arab's dusky complexion marks him as a "shadow," but not the personal shadow, rather an ethnic one associated not with my persona but with the totality of my personality, that is, with the self. (245)

The question of what happens to Europeans who venture into the primitive continent was one Jung posed to himself and one that, in *Heart of Darkness*, the company doctor asked of Marlow in a pre-departure physical. The company doctor, in fact, produced calipers and asked if he could measure Marlow's head, "I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there." When Marlow asks if he also measures the employees heads upon their return, the doctor remarks, "Oh, I never see them ... and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know" (9). Of his own intellectual curiosity about the impact of the African wilds inside the heads of Europeans, Jung writes:

To my astonishment, the suspicion dawned on me that I had undertaken my African adventure with the secret purpose of escaping from Europe and its complex of problems, even at the risk of remaining in Africa, as so many before me had done, and so many were doing at this very time.... What is going to happen to Jung the psychologist in the wilds of Africa? This was a question I had constantly sought to evade, in spite of my intellectual intention to study the European's reaction to primitive conditions (273).

Traveling northward on his way back toward Europe "from the heart of Africa", Jung journals that the answer to his question had been found:

Amid such thoughts I glided on the peaceful waters of the Nile toward the north -- toward Europe, toward the future....Thus the journey *from the heart of Africa* to Egypt became, for me, a kind of drama of the birth of light. That drama was intimately connected with me, with my psychology. ... I had wanted to know how Africa would affect me, and I had found out (273-4; emphasis added).

Both Jung and Conrad experienced Africa as a dreamscape, slipping from the physical to the metaphoric in a trance-like state. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Jung writes that, while in Kakamegas, "... I no longer knew whether I had been transported from reality into a dream, or from a dream to reality" (257). Similarly Conrad's narrator Marlow expresses the dreamlike quality of his narrative "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.... (Conrad, 24).

In addition to sharing the dreamlike nature of the African experience, both Conrad's narrator in the novella and Jung in his actual travels observed the phenomenon of time seeming to move backward as they travel into the African interior. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung journals, "The deeper we penetrated into the Sahara, the more time slowed down for me, it even threatened to move backward" (240). Paralleling Jung's impressions, Marlow observes "Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings" (Conrad, 30).

At moments in their respective African journeys both Jung, in his journal, and Marlow, in his fictional narrative, find themselves so far back in time that they might be the first men on a prehistoric earth. Jung writes,

Thousands of miles lay between me and Europe, mother of all demons. The demons could not reach me here -- there were no telegrams, no telephone calls, no letters, no visitors. My liberated psychic forces poured blissfully back to the primeval expanses” (264).

At one point Jung witnesses a “slim, brownish-black figure standing motionless on a jagged rock, leaning on a long spear” and observes,

I was enchanted by this sight -- it was a picture of something utterly alien and outside my experience, but on the other hand a most intense *sentiment du déjà vu*. I had the feeling that I had already experienced this moment and had always known this world which was separated from me only by distance in time. It was as if I were this moment returning to the land of my youth, and as it I knew that dark-skinned man who had been waiting for me for five thousand years (250).

Jung’s words echo those of Marlow, who refers to his boatload of pilgrims as “wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet,” observing, “We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance....We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were traveling in the night of the first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign -- and no memories” (Conrad, 31-32). Back in England, reflecting on his adventure into the wilderness, Marlow asks his English companions, “How can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man’s untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude...?” (44).

Both Jung in his “real life” journals and Marlow in his fictional tale slip between the cartographic and the metaphoric when they think about entering the African continent. Traveling on the Ugandan railroad into the interior, Jung comments, “we had, as it were, reached the edge of the oikumene , the inhabited earth from which trails stretched endlessly over the continent” (256). Whether the edge of the earth or its very center, these were no ordinary trips to a geographical destination. In a moment of premonition before leaving on his journey, Marlow comments, “... I felt as though, instead of going to the center of a continent, I were about to set off for the center of the earth” (Conrad, 10).

Jung and Marlow also paint very similar pictures of a frenzied, primitive wildness in the interior. Writes Jung, “The people ran around in a great state of excitement, shouting and gesticulating. They looked savage and rather alarming” (241). Similarly, Conrad, through Marlow, records “a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling...” (32). And then Conrad takes us the next step, as he allows Marlow to witness his own reflection in the wilderness and foreshadows the Jungian concept of shadow:

They howled and leaped and spun, and made horrible face; 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 of frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you -- you so remote from the night of the first ages -- could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything -- because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What is there after all? ...-- who can tell? -- but truth -- 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 be as much a man as these on shore. He must meet the truth ...(32).

Jung recognizes this same primitive vitality of the shadow in his analysis of his North African dreams,

The predominantly rationalistic European finds much that is human alien to him, and he prides himself on this without realizing that his rationality is won at the expense of his vitality, and that the primitive part of his personality is consequently condemned to a more or less underground existence... (245).

And, as if he were an intimate with Kurtz himself, Jung then touches on the sense of the prehistoric timelessness and the potential for slipping directly into the savage skin:

These dreams show that there is something in us which does not merely submit passively to the influence of the unconscious, but on the contrary rushes eagerly to meet it, identifying itself with the shadow...these seemingly alien...surroundings awaken an archetypal memory of an only too well known prehistoric past which apparently we have entirely forgotten. We are remembering a potentiality of life which has been overgrown by civilization...If we were to relive it naively, it would constitute a relapse into barbarism... (245- 246).

Describing what befell Kurtz as he slipped into the savage skin, Marlow says the “wilderness...had caressed him, and --lo! he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation (Conrad, 44). Jung’s dreams evidence a deep resonance with Kurtz’ psychological disintegration into his savage shadow self. Jung recognizes this potential of becoming savage, of “going black under the skin” as he analyzes one of his North African dreams with insight gained from his travels in tropical Africa:

I was not prepared for the existence of the unconscious forces within myself which would take the part of these strangers with such intensity, so that a violent conflict ensued... I was not to recognize the real nature of this disturbance until some years later, when I stayed in tropical Africa. It had been, in fact, the first hint of “going black under the skin,” a spiritual peril which threatens the uprooted European in Africa to an extent not fully appreciated. “where danger is, there is salvation also” -- these words of Holderlin often come to my mind in such situations. The salvation lies in our ability to bring the unconscious urges to consciousness... (245).

It is just this salvation through bringing the unconscious urges to consciousness that we witness in Marlow’s journey of individuation -- a journey which can be contrasted to that of his shadow double, Kurtz, who slips into the Horror! the Horror! of taking one step too many into the African continent and over the edge of the world. As Marlow contrasts himself to Kurtz,” True, he had made that last stride he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot”(65).

As long as we are standing at this precarious edge, there is one further parallel between Conrad and Jung that begs to be mentioned before examining some of the Jungian concepts “illuminated” by the novella. This last parallel relates to the mythological phenomenon of the underworld journey . The *Heart of Darkness* is clearly a cartographic and psychographic journey to the underworld. In *Rape and Revelation*, Evans Smith presents the thesis that “The descent to the underworld is the single most important myth for Modernist authors” and suggests that the it is also the “central myth of [Jung’s] psychotherapy (1). Smith reveals that, like Jung, Conrad himself experienced a descent to the underworld (in Conrad’s words “a taste of hell”) in the mental breakdown he had preceding the composition of the *Heart of Darkness* between 1897 and 1898 (19). Frederick Karl writes of this period of Conrad’s life as a descent “into his own kind of darkness” and observes that Conrad’s creative imagination carried him “down not only into memory but into the very chaos and extravagance of the unconscious ....Stalled, depressed, ill, he had touched bottom and had, in his own way, found his subject matter” (Smith, 20; Karl, 441). Similarly, between 1912 and 1916, Jung experienced his own psychological crisis “which he referred to as his personal descent to the underworld, during which the myths he lived by were revealed as the basis for all his future work” (Smith, 1). One might conclude that Jung and Conrad and Marlow - - and even Kurtz -- took heroic life journeys to the underworld -- meeting and embracing “the Horror! the Horror!”

“The Horror! The Horror!” takes us to the Jungian psychological construct of Shadow which, in the *Heart of Darkness*, is personified by Kurtz, Marlow’s diabolic double of the interior. The word “shadow” is used frequently throughout the novella -- sometimes capitalized as the personification materializes and as the concept of shadow is explored and confronted. When the pilgrims first carry Kurtz on a stretcher out of his cabin, Marlow describes Kurtz, observing, “This shadow looked satiated and calm” (55). When Marlow later discovers Kurtz missing from his steamer cabin and determines to find and capture him on shore, he comments, “I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone” ( 59). Overtaking the escaping Kurtz crawling in the bush, Marlow comments, “This clearly was not a case for fisticuffs, even apart from the very natural aversion I had to beat that Shadow -- this wandering and tormented thing” (60). Finally, back in London and paying a visit to

Kurtz' intended, Marlow has a vision of Kurtz as "a shadow insatiable of appearances...a shadow darker than the shadow of the night" (68).

In "The Journey to Hell: Satan, The Shadow, and the Self," Charlotte Spivack provides the following context for our consideration of shadow in the *Heart of Darkness*:

One of the archetypes of the collective unconscious is what Jung calls the shadow, the innate propensity for evil resident in the depths of human nature, "the negative side of the personality," as Jung puts it, "the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide" (429).

Spivack continues, explaining that the "shadow is the psychological equivalent of original sin...all men -- psychologically -- contain the shadow of evil....To become conscious of the shadow "challenges the whole ego personality " for it "involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real" (429).

The shadow, if unrecognized, enslaves. Jung could be describing the character of Kurtz himself when, writing on the inferiorities constituting the shadow, he observes, "On this lower level with its uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions one behaves more or less like a primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his affects...but also singularly incapable of moral judgment." Kurtz dies, gasping "the Horror! the Horror!" -- a horrific recognition that is reflected in Jung's remark "although it is quite within the bounds of possibility for a man to recognize the relative evil of his nature, it is a rare and shattering experience for him to gaze into the face of evil" (Spivack, 432).

Richard Hughs adds that "Kurtz' last words, "The horror! The horror!" sum up the Jungian insight that "from the same root that produces wild, untamed, blind instinct there grow up the natural laws and cultural forms that tame and break its pristine power. But when the animal in us is split off from consciousness by being repressed, it may easily burst out in full force, quite unregulated and uncontrolled. An outburst of this sort always ends in catastrophe -- the animal destroys itself" (21).

Leading us from an understanding of the Jungian concept of shadow to an exploration of the Jungian concept of individuation, Spivack makes the following points:

The word 'shadow' itself postulates the illusory nature of this unconscious assertion of evil; a shadow is a reflection of reality rather than substantial reality. But it is no less dangerous, for the archetypal; shadow in the unconscious spins the illusions that veil the conscious world, leaving the individual out of touch with reality. The person not yet acquainted with his shadow is in danger of refocusing the world into the replica of his own unknown face.... If the individual does not undertake the visionary journey to the potential hell buried in his own soul, the psychological hell of dis- integration will be just as inevitable as the theological hell of damnation (430).

In the *Heart of Darkness*, while Kurtz befalls what Spivack calls the "psychological hell of disintegration" (430), Marlow embarks on such a visionary journey -- a night sea journey, a hero's journey -- a journey of individuation.

In his biography of Conrad, Guerard states that the *Heart of Darkness* concerns "Marlow...and his journey toward and through certain facets or potentialities of self" and notes how "Marlow reiterates that he is 'recounting a spiritual voyage of self discovery.' He remarks casually but crucially that he did not know himself before setting out, and that he likes work for the chance it provides 'to know yourself...what no other man can ever know.'" For Marlow, Guerard observes, "the Inner Station was 'the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience,'" and he concludes, Marlow's was a "night journey into the unconscious, the confrontation with an entity within the self" (38).

Hughs, on the other hand, sees the novella as two journeys into the hidden self -- one is "horrifying, ending in personality destruction and death;" the other is "restorative, wisdom-producing, a gateway to wholeness...

Conrad has seized on the paradoxical quality of the descent into the unconscious..." revealing, the two faces of Dionysos, in the words of Jung: "Liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death" (58).

And the argument could be made that the work holds three journeys of individuation: those of Marlow, of Kurtz -- and of Conrad himself. Guerard in his biography, *Conrad the Novelist*, calls the *Heart of Darkness* "Conrad's longest journey in the self"(33).

Marlow's journey of individuation is open to rich interpretation. Hughs describes a the metaphoric layering of the journey: "Marlow's journey is thus spatial (into the African interior), temporal (back to the origins of man), and psychic (to the roots of his own unconscious) (62) and Spivack concurs with the three level interpretation:

Marlowe [sic] soon realizes, and accordingly informs his reader, that his journey is a triple one. Parallel with the geographical retreat up the river into the wilderness is a temporal journey backwards in time, leaving modern civilization and returning to the lush, vegetative, prehuman swamp world, as well as a psychological journey deep into his own personal hear of darkness, where lurks the impulse to savagery that he had never acknowledges while in the deceptive milieu of a sophisticated city (432).

In his *Collected Works* Jung expands on his concept of individuation. In his own words, it is:

the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; it is the development of the psychological individual ..as being distinct from the general, collective psychology.... Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation..., having for its goal the development of individual personality.... Individuation is practically the same as the development of consciousness out of the original state of identity.... It is thus an extension of the sphere of consciousness, an enriching of psychological life (6: 448-9).

There can be little doubt that Marlow undergoes a "development of consciousness" toward an "enriching of psychological life" as he follows the serpentine Congo toward the inner station and his encounter with Kurtz. Guerard adds the mythopoetic view, noting that Marlow's journey is "the archetypal myth dramatized in much great literature since the Book of Jonah: the story of an essentially solitary journey involving profound spiritual change in the voyager. In its classical form the journey is a descent into the earth, followed by a return to the light (47).

In *Trials of the Self: Heroic Ordeals in the Epic Tradition*, Lord provides the insight that "Marlow's riverine voyage leads him to a physical and meta physical cul-de-sac" reaching a climax "in labyrinthine centers of numinous experience" (194). Lord sees that the painful challenge of the journey of individuation in a secular society:

"Marlow is handicapped in his rite of passage by the fact that there is no ritual to guide him in his encounter with the *Heart of Darkness*; that the ultimate experience is not an illumination but a dark vision of human degradation; that the light by which Kurtz leads him is extinct...His ordeal , then, is an ordeal of individuation without any sustaining or authenticating myth and without any ritual to endow it with a more than purely personal coherence. He exemplifies the plight of man in a secular society that has discarded the encounter with the numinous as unscientific nonsense" (207).

Marlow's heroic journey of self discovery, whether archetypal, mythic, or stripped of ritual in a secular society, provides a literary metaphor for Jung's concept of individuation. "Jung's awareness that the darkness is part of himself, that to deny the darkness would be self-mutilation, and that awareness is not erased but heightened by a recognition of that dark self: this is Marlowe's (sic) discovery" (Hughs, 66).

For Jung, the integration of the personality is not possible without a full descent into the unconscious (Hughs, 66) and clearly the *Heart of Darkness* is about the descent into the unconscious, into the depths, into the underworld, into the very *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz is not only the personal shadow of Marlow, but the collective shadow of all of Europe and of European imperialism. Throughout the novella there is a dense

undergrowth of Congo unconsciousness, as Marlow succinctly states, “All of Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (45). In the “Role of the Unconscious” Jung writes “the further we remove ourselves from (the unconscious) with our enlightenment and our rational superiority, the more it fades into the distance, but is made all the more potent by everything that falls into it, thrust out by our one-sided rationalism. This lost bit of nature seeks revenge” (Hughs, 54-55 ). Pushed down and repressed, it seeks horrific revenge.

The Jungian unconscious and the collective unconscious are so pervasive in Conrad’s work that a full treatment of the concepts falls beyond the scope of this paper. Hopefully it has become clear thus far that Marlow’s journey toward individuation and his encounter with the darkness of his own shadow are set against a jungled backdrop of the personal and the collective unconscious. It would seem that, in the midst of so much shadow and heroism and individuation, an encounter with Jung’s concept of the anima might provide some needed balance in our exploration. Similarly in the *Heart of Darkness*, it is just at the point of deepest penetration into the unconscious continent that She appears, “along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman” (56). She is the feminine soul of the wild, Kurtz’s savage consort, queen of the underworld and black madonna of the Congo. She is anima and she is magnificent.

Before we approach Conrad’s wild woman, let us put her in the context of the heroic journey of integration. In *Trials of the Self*, Lord presents an heroic context for Marlow’s entire narration, noting specifically the role of the anima in the Jungian journey of integration:

The story begins with the hero leaving home, with its protective but unchallenging milieu, on a quest that will establish his separate identity as a person of exceptional courage and wisdom. The journey requires his entering another world, usually repellent or monstrous, with incidental encounters with hostile or apocalyptic figures that Jung calls threshold guardians. The other world is typically transpersonal and supernatural and often the land of the dead. Usually he has a guide or some other source of secret knowledge .... On his journey he acquires a mystical understanding of the past and future that will afterward guide him, as an individuated self, in his efforts to return to his society...The ordeal of individuation may entail the hero’s encounter with and integration of his anima, the feminine shadow aspect of his personality, in what Jung calls the syzygy... (5-6).

Thus, for our hero Marlow, it is time to encounter the feminine shadow as well. Having reached the Inner Station and having brought the emaciated, skeletal shade of Kurtz on board the steamer, the personification of anima appears on the shore:

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed clothes, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch men...(56).

Could there be a more apt personification of the anima, a more elegant description of the feminine nature of the soul of man? She is wild. She is strong. She is dark. She is primitive. She is warrior and goddess. She is adorned and adored. From the deck of his lumbering steamship which now held the frail body of Kurtz, Marlow continues his awed description:

She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly on the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul (56).

She is a reflection of the soul of the wilderness and she is the wilderness itself: “She stood looking at us without a stir, and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose.” She is the last image seen before the steamer departs the *Heart of Darkness* and she gives blessing to the retreating figure of Kurtz in a shadowed embrace:



Suddenly she opened her bare arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace” (56).

This extraordinary anima, this black queen of the underworld, has a Persephone counterpart, another personification of the anima waiting for Kurtz back in London. It is Kurtz’ innocent intended, to whom Marlow brings the remnants of Kurtz’ letters and his falsified last words. Convinced she knew and understood her Kurtz better than anyone ever could have, she too carries the anima of Conrad’s strange journey, sharing a gesture locks her in symbolic embrace with her underworld counterpart. Describing Kurtz’s still mourning fiancée in her London apartment, Marlow observes:

She put her arms as if after a retreating figure, stretching them back and with clasped pale hands across the fading and narrow sheen of the window... I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal steam, the stream of darkness (71).

Smith in *Rape and Revelation* iterates this impression, “At the nadir of his descent, Marlow encounters a powerful Queen of the Underworld, a Persephone who personifies the ‘tenebrous’ and passionate’ soul of the jungle .... In addition, when he returns he meets an avatar of Persephone in her inscrutable innocence” (25).

Hughes calls her “the grand archetype of the unconscious, consort of the mad Kurtz and the goal of the inner search” (268-269). She is the “soul as anima,” “the inner attitude,” “the inward face.” Jung’s explains, “The inner personality is the way one behaves in relation to one’s inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude, the characteristic face that is turned towards the unconscious....the inner attitude, the inward face, I call anima” (XI: 467).

Perhaps it is the anima which allows for the paradox within the title the *Heart of Darkness* -- perhaps she, the anima, is the throbbing heart of the darkness. David Miller in *Hells and Holy Ghosts* , refers to the “paradoxical, if no less real, poetic and inferential light of historical darkneses,” referring to the “irony of Joseph Conrad’s title.” Miller concludes, “That darkness has a heart ...which mystics and philosophers join poets in acknowledging.... C.G. Jung, for example, out of his experience as a therapist, wrote:

Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic feature of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular (93-4).

The Anima, the Shadow, Individuation and the journey to the heart of the Personal and Collective Unconscious are thus illuminated in the dark meditation of the *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad’s novella has become seen as a literary metaphor of the psychological concepts of Carl Jung, expressing in its deep journey the very heart of Jung’s philosophy that “light from above makes the darkness still darker, but light from within the darkness turns blackness bright” (Jung, C W, 13.335).

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