

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND EPIPHANY: A STUDY OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS AND JAMES JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines self-consciousness and epiphany in Joseph Conrad's 1902 novel *Heart of Darkness* and James Joyce's 1916 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with the aim of illustrating that these modernist writers' focus on the individual or subjective consciousness and self-discovery of the main characters is enriched by autobiographical elements prompted by the nihilism of the early twentieth century. Although *Heart of Darkness* is a colonial novel and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* traces the development of a potential artist, both converge on the themes of hypocrisy and injustice. Using the Psychoanalytic literary theory, the paper demonstrates that both Conrad and Joyce effectively explore self-awareness and discovery by the inclusion of various aspects of their real life experiences in their novels. In other words, the experiences of the protagonists in both works reflect those of their authors. Conrad and Joyce use their protagonists as mouthpieces to project individual freedom and the bestial part of man. Through that look inwards, the authors discover themselves and define a certain artistic consciousness. Both authors portray not what is dominantly fictional but what they were a part of. It is the exploration of consciousness from an autobiographical perspective that gives the British modernist novel its strength and major difference. Both authors demonstrate that without restraint, mutual respect and sincerity, the individual and society degenerate.

Keywords: Self-consciousness, epiphany, modernist, autobiography.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores self-consciousness and epiphany in Joseph Conrad's 1902 novel *Heart of Darkness* and James Joyce's 1916 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Using the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of the conscious and unconscious, the analysis focuses on the notion that the consciousness of the protagonists, namely Marlow's as an explorer and Stephen's as an artist, is enriched by autobiographical undertones. Their experiences like those of their authors, impinged on their consciousness as seen in their critique of certain prejudices, beliefs and values in their societies. To explore the consciousness of the main characters to show how they feel and react towards nihilistic realities effectively, Conrad and Joyce use the stream of consciousness technique which is a major modernist feature. Through the epiphanies of their protagonists, the two authors project how the two main characters come to an understanding of themselves, their societies and man in general.

Autobiographical elements enhance the psychological penetration of the characters in these novels. Marlow's and Stephen's views echo those of Conrad and Joyce respectively. Focus is on how the main characters think and feel about nihilistic practices in their respective societies. Conrad through Marlow criticizes and subverts imperialist ideology although it was generally

endorsed in his time. Like Conrad, Joyce through Stephen's strained relations with family, religion and country reveals how he related to the various tensions in his formative years. Through Marlow's and Stephen's epiphanies the two authors project how the two main characters come to an understanding of themselves and their own weaknesses, an understanding of the society and man in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As concerns a comparative analysis on the works of Conrad and Joyce, Szczeszak-Brewer (2010) in *Empire and Pilgrimage in Conrad and Joyce*, demonstrates the ways in which these authors grapple with the issues of the grand narrative, paralysis, hegemonic practices, the individual's pilgrimage toward self-definition- within the rigid bounds of imperial ideologies and myths. Neary (1999) focuses on religious consciousness. In a comparative method in *Like and Unlike God: Religious Imaginings*, Neary argues that Conrad's religious imagining calls attention to the gaping tension between traditional human virtues and radically relativised forms while Joyce's tend to create bridges and linkages to heal this tension. Lewis in *Modernism, Nationalism and The Novel*, rereads four major subjectivist novels-James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marcel Proust's *A La Recherche du temps perdu*, and Gabriele d'Annunzio's *Nocturne*-in a context of the period's political discourse of liberal nationalism, providing a timely and historicist reassessment of modernist politics and the modern novel. Lewis demonstrates that these novelists used their subjectivist experiments with narrative and point of view (impressionism and stream of consciousness) to focus "attention on the shaping of the individual by the nation and on the potential for the individual in turn to redeem the nation in time of war or crisis". (p. 11)

Marlow's description of Africa and Africans and his attitude towards them is born out of Conrad's experience in the Belgian- Congo in the 1890s during the period of the scramble for Africa. Stephen's strained relations with his family, the Catholic faith and his nationality echo those of Joyce in the background of the Irish question. This paper explores the question of whether Marlow in the way he perceives and conceptualizes Africa and Africans on his voyage, simply reproduces the stereotypes of imperialist ideology, or manages to critique, or even subverts the latter by developing new ways of seeing thus echoing Conrad's view. It also portrays how Stephen's rebellion and his decision to go on exile are Joyce's own conviction.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of the conscious and unconscious in the analysis because Conrad and Joyce explore the inner lives of their protagonists to reveal how they feel and think and why they behave the way they do.

RESULTS

Conrad and Joyce are both subjects and creators in their works thus bridging the dichotomy between art and life. The key element in their modernist consciousness is the nihilism of the early twentieth century. The trauma comes as a result of the rejection of moral values which uphold human dignity.

DISCUSSION

Marlow the Explorer and Stephen the Artist

Conrad and Joyce use their autobiographical protagonists, Marlow and Stephen, to project their thoughts and feelings about their own flaws and their reactions towards those of the society. This is done through the journey motif and controlled stream of consciousness in *Heart of Darkness* and a glaring stream of consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Since Conrad's novel is transitional, its exploration of character is both physical and psychological while Joyce's exploration is much more psychological.

A journey in literature can be used to demonstrate a variety of things. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad uses the journey both to describe Marlow's journey to discover Africa and figuratively, to project Marlow's journey into himself. Conrad reflects his traumatic experience in the Belgian-Congo through Marlow as he penetrates into the jungle in *Heart of Darkness*. Zins writes that Conrad's condemnation of imperialism and colonialism, combined with sympathy for its persecuted and suffering victims, was drawn from his Polish background, his own personal sufferings, and the experience of a persecuted people living under foreign occupation (p.63). Personal memories created in him a great sensitivity for human degradation and a sense of moral responsibility.

Guerard posits that Marlow is recounting a spiritual voyage of self-discovery (p.36). Throughout the novel, the main character relates his experiences journeying up the Congo River in quest of another white man, Kurtz. This enigmatic man had been received and treated by the natives as a god, but perhaps because he had gone into the jungle without knowing himself, and unprepared for the ordeal awaiting him, his misconduct takes him beyond the limits of his heart; thus, he is punished with madness and death. In the contrary, Marlow does not transgress his limits and comes back without fully understanding his experience. Although the heart of darkness tries to exercise its influence on him too, he is able to restrain himself by recognizing its fascination and its abomination, and by resisting the desire to join those unspeakable rites. Conrad introduces us into the narrative, with autobiographical information which reflects his own experience, stating how his main character had a passion for maps since he was a little boy: "I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth [...] by this time it was not a blank space any more..." (p.1763).

Throughout the journey, different voices announce Kurtz as an artist, as an interpreter of life, and Marlow longs to meet him. Kurtz is the only man in whom he can feel interest, and this becomes a passion when he learns that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had entrusted him with the making of a report for future guidance. Through Conrad's irony, the reader is informed that, Marlow has created an image of Kurtz that may be the prototype of the man he himself would have liked to be. He thinks that Kurtz can tell him things about himself which he does not know. And so intensely does he feel the possible connection between himself and the man, that he follows him with no clear sense of his behaviour and thinks that: "this must have been before his -let us say- nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites (p.1796)".

Conrad's controlled stream of consciousness helps the reader see what goes through the narrator's mind. It is through this that we consider Marlow the voice of conscience. Each situation that Marlow meets on his journey brings him to another comprehension of his fellow human beings. This disturbs the plot of the story. We find Marlow contemplating on the things

he has discovered. When he meets the Africans who have been used and abandoned he reflects on them: “Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light in all the attribute of pain, abandonment, and despair ... they were dying slowly – it was clear” (p.1770). The condition of the blacks shows to what extent they were treated as subhuman. When Marlow overhears the manager and his uncle discussing negatively about Kurtz, he reflects on their conversation which deepens his knowledge about the evil part of man. Marlow observes that their evil conversation “was so startling that I leaped to my feet and looked back at the edge of the forest as though I had expected an answer of some sort to that black display of confidence” (p.1783). Conrad gives his opinion about cruel imperialism and the consequences of creating a new society. The unnamed narrator’s stream of consciousness informs the reader that he is on the Nellie with Marlow and three other individuals. Because Marlow feels revolted by what he observes the Europeans doing in Africa, he distances himself from his own culture. Thus he manages to step outside imperialist ideology’s totalizing world – view, and frees his mind for new ways of seeing. He turns with sympathy to those suffering the most from the Europeans’ invasion, the Africans. In his delineation of the atrocious treatment of the blacks at the outer and central stations, Marlow’s emphasis is on the misery and humanity of the Africans rather than on their alleged inferiority.

Heart of Darkness demonstrates that the mind and the inner life of the individual are far more complex than what can become apparent at the level of the restricted reality of external events. “The mind of man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage – who can tell? – but truth – truth stripped of its cloak of time” (1785). Marlow, as the narrator and the person who experiences the story, serves Conrad’s artistic purpose by his investigating abilities, of self and other. His readiness to expose himself to the challenge of initiation makes him into the perfect embodiment of Conrad’s philosophy. Artistically, Marlow is meaning, while being, at the same time, the way or access to the meaning of reality.

Marlow’s description of the work at the railway becomes ironic as nothing of the kind is happening. The white people in charge of the station are certainly no superior beings or representatives of a master race as suggested by imperialist propaganda. To Marlow they appear as “flabby, pretending, weak – eyed devils of a rapacious and pitiless folly” (p.1770). Instead of fulfilling their vaunted philanthropic mission to civilize and humanize the natives, they treat the Africans like slaves, brutally exploiting their labour power and natural resources as well as inventing excuses to punish or torture them. Anthony Fothergill in *Heart of Darkness; Open Guides to Literature* stipulates that Marlow seems to regard the Africans as his equals: “with a curiosity of their impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses” (p.71).

Parry argues that Marlow’s view is determined by imperialist ideology. She notes that what Marlow observes on his journey belongs not to history but to fantasy (p.29). Although Marlow is often on the very threshold of new ways of seeing, he draws back from the dangers of too much reality. On the one hand, he manages to overcome the boundaries of dominant ideologies through his willingness to engage sympathetically with an unknown African reality, which is partly the result of his shock at colonialist practice in the Congo. On the other hand, he seeks the comforting shelter of an imperialist world- view when he is under psychological pressure and fears the dissolution of his identity. The fact that Marlow does not completely transcend the imperialist perspective or wholly communicate his individual perspective about colonialism has been the cause of much controversy in the novel.

Through Marlow's consciousness, Conrad succeeds in showing that his perspective of Africa and Africans is ambiguous and contradictory. Sometimes it reaffirms imperialist and racist stereotypes, sometimes it transcends and even subverts the reasons for European civilization of Africa. While Said claims that Marlow's Africa and his Africans come "from a huge library of Africanism" (p.79), he nevertheless asserts that, because of Conrad's own position as a cultural hybrid, he manages to endow Marlow with the self-consciousness of an outsider, which allows him to "comprehend how the empire works, given that he and it are fundamentally not in perfect synchrony or correspondence" (p. 27). Achebe in a 1975 lecture criticized Conrad for his racist stereotypes towards the African continent and people of Africa. Achebe declared that Conrad was a 'bloody racist' (p. 788). In response, Watts in argues that really Conrad and Achebe are on the same side" (p. 204). Watts declares that "Far from being a purveyor of comforting myths, Conrad most deliberately and incisively debunks such myths" (p. 197). Just as Conrad's life and vision are echoed by his protagonist, Joyce's is echoed through Stephen

Peak with a lot of certainty holds that in the novel a mature artist looks back over his own youth, from a particular viewpoint, perceiving what was significant to his development as an artist, estimating what was vital and what was transitory in that development, and viewing his early self with purposeful irony (p. 56). Joyce like Conrad, explores his protagonist's developing mind and consciousness of the world around him through the stream of consciousness technique. Unlike Conrad whose technique is limited, Joyce's stream of consciousness is much more glaring. Joyce's narrative is tightly focused; he does not tell what is happening but rather tries to show what is happening without explaining the events that he is showing. The focus is exclusively on the central character, Stephen, who is present on virtually every page. Every narrative detail is filtered through Stephen's consciousness. Gunes opines that Joyce does not give Stephen's rejection of Catholic Church, his family and country through a direct statement, yet the reader learns it through the lives and views of his fictional characters as well as through the views of the characters about each other (p. 40).

Stephen's growing consciousness of an artistic vocation like Joyce's is influenced by the pressures and conflicts he faces in his family, the church and the political situation of his country. Reichert points out that the novel deals with the portrayal of a child who struggles through the squalor of society to self-expression and how this can only be achieved on exile (p. 78). Stephen's obsession with language; his strained relations with religion, family and culture; and his dedication to forging an aesthetic doctrine of his own mirror the ways in which Joyce related to the various tensions in his life during his formative years. Like Stephen, Joyce was the son of a religious mother and a financially inept father. Like Stephen, Joyce was the eldest of ten children and received his education at Jesuit schools. Like Stephen, Joyce left Ireland to pursue the life of a poet and writer.

In Chapter One, we are given a window into Stephen's consciousness. The narrative prose follows and reflects the stages of Stephen's intellectual development, whether imitating the childlike simplicity of his earliest memories or the thrilling awareness of his artistic awakening. It swoops when Stephen is high; it crashes when he is brought low. The beginning of the book which describes Stephen's experiences as a baby, represents the thoughts of an infant as well as other people's so-called baby talk to an infant: "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow...His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face" (p. 7). Through the indirect presentation of the third person one can determine Stephen's age, at a given moment, by the construction of the sentences and by the maturity of the language.

Stephen's family is the first to influence his growing consciousness. Joyce reports Stephen's awareness of how his father's face looks, how the wet bed feels, the "queer smell" (p. 7) of the oil sheet and the nice smell of his mother. He sings a song and listens to his mother's piano playing. Thus at an early age Stephen develops a sense of hatred for his father. That is why his mother's smell is nicer than his father's and also he buys his mother dresses with the money he wins from a prize. Stephen's senses are all alive and it is these senses which he uses to discriminate and identify the problems of his family, country and religion. Stephen holds his father responsible for the wretched family situation, his inability to pay his fees not because he does not have money but because he is a spendthrift.

Because of his father's reckless spending, the family constantly have to move from one cheerless house to another and this affects Stephen's consciousness negatively. Joyce had a similar experience in real life as recorded by Ellmann: "Meanwhile bills accumulated, the landlord was upon the family for his rent, and probably late in 1894, the Joyces prepared to move again. The sense of home life as a continual crisis, ... became fixed in James Joyce's mind" (p. 15). The father's inability to pay Stephen's fees necessitates his removal from Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit Boarding school. A friendly priest, Father Conmee, however arranges for Stephen to get a free place at Belvedere, a Jesuit day school in the city. Stephen gradually separates himself from his own family. He becomes totally disillusioned with his father during a visit to the latter's home town of Cork. He is embarrassed by his cheap flirtatiousness with barmaids and is disgusted by his excessive drinking. Shame and humiliation open a chasm between his father and himself. As the novel closes, Stephen's family becomes more destitute. He can do little to help them. Sacrifices are made for his education, but there is nothing he can really do to alleviate the poverty of his family. He feels removed from them, and though his mother continues to be loving, his father seems to have developed a certain amount of animosity against Stephen as seen when he refers to Stephen as a "lazy bitch" (p. 159).

The Roman Catholic Church also has a great influence on Stephen's growing consciousness as an artist. Brought up in a devout Catholic family, Stephen initially ascribes to an absolute belief in the morals of the church. The place of religion in Ireland and the conflict between clerical and secular authority, is the subject of the argument between Dante Riordan and John Casey at the Christmas dinner in chapter one. The argument centers on the church's treatment of the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stuart Parnell, a member of the British parliament, who had led the fight for Home Rule, a form of limited independence for Ireland. However, just as he seemed on the verge of success, he was named in a divorce case in 1890 by the husband of Kitty O'shea. Because of this, the Catholic Church in Ireland denounced Parnell, who was disgraced and who died shortly thereafter in 1891. His supporters felt intense bitterness. Mr. Casey who is a Catholic argues bitterly that the clergy should stay out of politics and says that "we have had too much God in Ireland" (36). Simon Dedalus echoes this argument, calling the Irish "an unfortunate priest-ridden race. A priest ridden God-forsaken race" (p. 35). This argument affects Stephen's consciousness negatively. The unjust punishment he receives from father Dolan equally shocks Stephen. Having suffered the misfortune of having his glasses broken he suffers the injustice of being punished for it.

Sin - particularly Stephen's sense of sin, as defined by the Catholic Church is a major aspect of his self- exploration and awareness of God and religion. He is deeply disturbed by the consciousness of his own sin in his encounters with prostitutes. When Father Arnall's preaching at the retreat moves him to repentance, he goes for confession. Thereafter, he lives an intense life of prayer and mortification. However, Stephen realizes that both of these

lifestyles – the completely sinful and the completely devout – are extremes. He does not want to lead a completely debauched life, but also rejects Catholicism because he feels that it does not permit him to indulge in his passions uncontrollably. Casey comments that in certain ways, Stephen's beliefs are more rigid than the tradition he rejects (p. 78). He will not budge in his convictions, irrespective of the suffering he imposes on others.

Concerning the political situation in his country, Stephen thinks "Ireland is the old sow that eats its farrow" (p. 185). This means there is no continuity. He realizes that Ireland is destructive even to its own self, so he goes on exile. Stephen senses his own Irish inheritance while at the university, not as a great blessing, but as a series of fetters imposed by history on his generation. Moreover, he knows from the past that Irish nationalist movements tend to lead not to victorious achievements by the leaders, but to their betrayal and martyrdom. Despite his desire to steer clear of politics, Stephen constantly ponders Ireland's place in the world. He concludes that the Irish have always been a subservient people, allowing outsiders to control them. In his conversation with the dean of studies at the University, he realizes that even the language of the Irish people really belongs to the English. Stephen's perception of Ireland's subservience has two effects on his development as an artist. Firstly, it makes him determined to escape the bonds that his Irish ancestors have accepted. As we see in his conversation with Davin, Stephen feels an anxious need to emerge from his Irish heritage as his own person, free from the shackles that have traditionally confined his country: "Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made?" (p. 184). Secondly, Stephen's perception makes him determined to use his art to reclaim autonomy for Ireland. Using the borrowed language of English, he plans to write in a style that will be both autonomous from England and true to the Irish people.

Stephen's decision at the end of the novel to leave his family and friends behind and go on exile in order to become an artist suggests that Joyce sees the artist as a necessarily isolated figure. In his decision, Stephen turns his back on his community, refusing to accept the constraints of political involvement, religious devotion, and family commitment that the community places on its members. However, though the artist is an isolated figure, Stephen's ultimate goal is to give a voice to the very community that he is leaving. He recognizes that his community will always be a part of him, as it has created and shaped his identity.

Marlow's and Stephen's Epiphanies

In *Heart of Darkness* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Marlow and Stephen both experience epiphanies, dramatic moments in which they intuitively grasp the meaning of a situation that brings them to a better and wholesome understanding of themselves and their respective societies. Marlow experiences an epiphany when he comes across the blacks who have been used and abandoned to die in the grove. He realizes that they have suffered under European rule. He observes that the European's presence is not making the Africans more civilized. It turns the Europeans into savages. This epiphany is the beginning of Marlow's comprehension that he has not taken a job with opportunity and money but one filled with inefficient, greedy, cruel and back biting Europeans.

The restraint manifested by the so called cannibals serves as an epiphany for Marlow. The blacks are not as savage as he had thought. That these cannibals who have suffered starvation for long and who outnumbered Marlow and his kind by thirty to five did not eat them, push Marlow into thinking and to change the common negative belief about the blacks. Marlow thus exclaims: "Restraint! I would just as soon have expected restraint from a hyena prowling among the corpses of a battle field (p. 1789-94). These cannibals exercise restraint even in the

most desperate circumstance; hunger. Kurtz and the other Europeans lack restraint and that is why they degenerate into savages.

Upon first entering the mouth of Congo River, Marlow declares his stance on lies, “You know I hate, detest and can’t bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me” (p. 1778). After reading Kurtz’s report about his progress down the Congo, Marlow finds that Kurtz lied, and in part loses all the respect he had for him. However, Marlow still continues to pursue him. He meets Kurtz, 200 miles later, who is the object of his psychological desire, only to find him very ill. After Kurtz’s death, Marlow finds himself transformed into a person he thought he would never become, a liar. Marlow lies to Kurtz’s Intended about Kurtz’s last words when he returns to Europe. Stewart describes it as “...lie’s fatal taint makes rot even of a man’s deathbed integrity” (p. 319). Kurtz’ depravity and subsequent death in Africa are a consequence of the lies of European civilization of which he is an embodiment. Marlow, in spite of his hatred for lies, lies to console the Intended so as to keep her in the illusion of Kurtz’s integrity. The pattern to self-discovery in *Heart of Darkness* is revealed through Marlow’s confrontation with Kurtz. Marlow’s journey into the Congo gives him an opportunity to go through the process of awareness and calm attention and so he begins to see things in a better light than before. Through the narrative, we notice the changes that Marlow undergoes from a confused complex and discriminating mind, through patience and watchfulness, he comes to a restful awareness of his true self.

Joyce’s method in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is to move from one experience to another in a series of epiphanies which reveal to Stephen the character of the world he lives in, the demands it is making and the corresponding movements within himself towards acquiescence or rejection of it. They are rooted in commonplace events like Mr. Dedalus’s recapitulation of the laughter with which Father Conmee and Father Dolan relished Stephen’s protest over the unjust caning, the momentary intimacy with Emma on the steps of the last tram, and the spectacle of the girl wading in the sea. These simple events achieve momentousness in the full unveiling of their character to the developing mind of Stephen. The momentary intimacy with Emma on the steps of the last tram contributes to Stephen’s personal education. Interwoven with this record of emotional development, Joyce traces the growing artistic confidence of Stephen’s persistence in championing the rebel Byron against the respectable Tennyson. Emma seems to appear throughout the novel both as Stephen’s idealized vision of Irish womanhood and as a representation of the Irish society’s stereotypical attitudes of and toward women against which Stephen rebels.

Stephen’s confidence in the authority at school is undermined when he later discovers that his bold protest against Father Dolan’s unjust caning becomes a subject for laughter: “... when I told them all at dinner about it, Father Dolan and I had a great laugh over it (p. 67). This attitude contributes to Stephen’s subsequent rejection of a vocation to the priesthood. Having rejected the call to a religious life, Stephen experiences another of the epiphanies which mark each climax in his search for identity. As he hears his surname called aloud by his friends, Stephen recognizes the prophetic quality of its association with Daedalus who took flight from the Labyrinth, with his son Icarus, on wings of his own devising. He experiences a vision of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood. The vision is confirmed by the actual presence of a beautiful, bird-like girl in the sea. Her beauty and her stillness fill him with rapture: “A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane’s and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself” (p. 156). Ellmann states

that Joyce had a similar experience in real life: “The incident actually occurred to Joyce about that time” (p. 55). In looking at her beauty, he realizes his artistic vocation; the beauty of art. He now considers the priest’s suggestion as a kind of trap, a way for the Jesuits to take him from his own fate and make him serve their ends.

CONCLUSIONS

Conrad’s own experiences provided him with the material from which he created *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad, in his text, used his own experiences not simply because he was only interested in how life treated him and how he reacted to this treatment but because he wished to allow his readers to use the same characters and incidents to bring a meaning to life as it exists in their own real world. So it can be said that the importance of Conrad’s experiences reflected in the novel can be recognized well if they are related with the themes of restraint and man’s journey into self. It is restraint through which Marlow is saved, and, by the lack of which Kurtz is doomed. Another theme in the novel is that the real darkness is in man’s heart. Despite its autobiographical quality, the novel attracts the attention of today’s readers because the idea given in the novel is closely allied to the real world as we experience it. It is because of this quality of the novel that today we read *Heart of Darkness*. The Irish authority, churchmen and nationalist leaders, exercised a strong grip on the imagination of Irish writers. They considered any kind of deviation or artistic innovation as a heresy or treason. In Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, social convention, Catholicism, and Irish nationalism are presented as being the basic impediment for Ireland’s progress and the reason behind the Irish writer’s decision to go into exile.

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