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## Analysis of the Book "Heart of the Darkness"

Heart of the darkness, a book written by Joseph Conrad, is one of the best books that are related with the imperialism and the expeditions that made the empires in order to expand themselves in territory and influence by diplomacy or militarism. In a certain way this book related the journey of Joseph Conrad through the Congo River which is located in the Belgian Congo a territory that belonged to the Belgian Empire and where they traffic ivory and all sorts of materials to then commercialize with them. Joseph Conrad tells his own story through a character called Marlow who wanted to travel since kid to the Congo River. Also in the book i could read how the sailors saw the jungle and the river with fear and ignorance.

At the beginning of the book we could see Marlow telling his own story to his partners that were with him on the boat. When he was a child he wanted to go to the Belgian Congo and when he grew up he move all his contacts to becoming captain of a steam ship. Later he arrived to the Congo River but he did not know anything about Africa despite of that he still wanted to continue his journey. One day when he was in a settlement he saw a bunch of slaves carrying materials for construct a railway track, those railways were very important in the Congo because of the immense benefit of the Belgian and French colony, but in order to construct railways the natives slaves were supposed to work every hour without break and they finished it after a lot of months. If a slave was hurt while he was working the soldiers in charge of them must have to kill him because for them he was useless and the only way in which he would become useful was trying to find his tribe but he would not succeed. That is a clear example of brutality and violence against the Africans and I think those treatments were unacceptable because the natives were also human beings and they should had rights. "They died slowly... That was clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly, only black shadows of illness and exhaustion, that lay confusedly in the greenish darkness" (Conrad, J., 27) Marlow, the main character, said that when he found around the river a lot of black malnourished people abandoned by his owners for being useless for them. They died slowly because there was nothing to eat and some of them were not born in his tribe and grow up with the Europeans later that cause that no one of them knew how to use any kind of weapon to hunt. According to Conrad's words he felt a kind of empathy, compassion and pity for the Africans because they did not know what freedom was, the slaves spend all his life living with strangers and doing what they order but they did not have the fault of being mistreated it was the destiny and a bigger cause. It should be noted that in 1899 were laws that "protected" the slaves with contract, those laws said that every month the owners must deliver 4 kilograms of rubber to his slave people. The population must act in peace and accept the rubber but if somebody was trying to act violently the owners were allowed to use also the violence and their weapons. In 1865 Leopold II said that all the regions that were not civilized should be forced to work.

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Somebody asked “Why?” and he stated two points: the first one said that the people should value the work and the security by paying taxes to the conquerors; the second one said that indigenous people should value the habit of work so in that way the owners could be rewarded by the work of them. In a few words those statements said that the natives or the indigenous people were only destined to work for the conquerors and to provide them all the luxuries that they wanted.

As I said before the Belgian Empire traffic a lot of ivory and in this activity there was some recognize traffickers such as Mr. Kurtz. Mr. Kurtz was an imaginary person who created Conrad through several famous people: When he was travelling across the Congo River he met an agent of the company who was sick of dysentery (a commonly disease in Africa) and unfortunately he was going to die after three days, in the story Marlow met Kurtz when he was sick and he die in the journey after three days; Arthur Eugene Constant was a trafficker of ivory that extract it in a fancy way and apparently a little violent, his enemies considered that he related too much with the natives and also that occurs with Mr. Kurtz; Guillaume Van Kerckhoven and Leon Rom collected heads and Rom putted them in stakes around his house and as you can see in the reading Kurtz made the same but with the rebels of the tribe that he was related. So as a resume, Kurtz was a trafficker who cared about the natives but also he did not lose the purpose to extract ivory.

In the book you can see a scene in which Marlow and his crew was in the central settlement of the Belgian Congo and suddenly the steam ship, in which Marlow was the captain, crashed with rocks and broke out the ship. This situation caused a lot of problems to Marlow because the reparations to the boat required a lot of time and effort and since the slaves were the responsible for repairing the ship they did not know howto repair it because they were not engineers or at least they did not know how to read. Another problem related with the reparation is that the materials that Marlow need arrived a lot of months later and without the materials the slave could not repair the ship.

There is a thing that caught my attention and was that only a few cared about the natives like Mr. Kurtz or Marlow, the rest saw them as enemies and animals. One objective of the book is to make the reader saw that deep in the heart a person could have an evil side or good side, the characters in his majority showed an evil side because the only thing in which they cared was themselves, not only the slaves were discriminated but also the privates and the sailors. This is a problem that we live actually and it is called hypocrisy, you think that a person is good, kindness and all sort of things but deep in his heart he or she has an evil side or talk wrong things about you at your back.

Previously I talked about a way of punishment to the slaves but there is another method that is called whip through the chicotte, a whip made of dry skin from hippopotamus that left terrible

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wounds on the victim and through the pass of the time the slave could die. This for me was brutal because it was unnecessary such violence only for small things and even for bigger. As a conclusion, I think that the slavery by the conquerors of the empires to the Africans was a cruel and violent practice because also they do hard work in which they require a lot of effort and strength and the women were used to other activities like cooking or to be maids, they did not have medical attention and that caused the death of thousands, they did not have freedom and they work a lot of hours under the sun causing that it hurt their skin.

Also it felt inhuman for me that they had to be separated from their families to bring them to the force to Europe in such bad conditions and that they would use them in work force and that they would be marked as animals to control them. What is worst for me is that they were punished throwing away the hope of being free and also to throw away the value that they deserve at that point the soldiers did not respect his rights but the saddest thing is that nowadays that racism is present.

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