

MORTAL IMPERFECTION: THE REVENGE OF THE SOCIAL ANIMAL IN 'HEART OF DARKNESS' AND 'MOBY DICK'

By

SUMBAL MAQSOOD

Lecturer in English, Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore and peek into the psychological hell of the so-called superior beings who, in their megalomaniacal intentions make the world a difficult place to live for some groups based on ethnicity, culture, race, religion, and other differences. It looks into the duplicity and double standards of people and the way they exploit a privileged birthright to target and demean other groups exalting themselves as the preferred 'self' over the marginalized 'others'. The sham of superficial, social lifestyles is exposed as the web of morality and a politicized sense of right and wrong is questioned. Power structures that uphold society are based on flimsy differentiations that utilize the principle of 'might is right' as a power hierarchy is established to subjugate and exploit the less-privileged and weaker groups on Earth. This research challenges the subject-object duality and the veneer of civilization that is rampant in the modern world and that views the world in a sharply divided vision of black and white, ignoring the grey shades where the question of individuality, identity and personality arises-the potency of the beliefs of all beings cannot be neglected by imposing labels of 'savages' and 'barbarians'. The act of imposition by the civilized world over primitive groups itself is an act of savagery and this paper would be questioning why man is unwilling to come to terms with his 'other', the part that completes him and defines him, and is an essential part of his evolving personality. The core of evil and primitivity is ineradicable in every being and it is individuality that will control the behavior, not forcefully imposed social constructs. There is a very thin line between what the civilized world calls 'normal' and what it labels as 'savage' as man was essentially born as natural as the wilderness around him, his soul as unfettered as the soaring eagle. This untamed wilderness is man's reality and when he tries to harness it, he transgresses upon values that are inevitably connected with his history, his evolution, his concept of civilization and his superstructure of formal education. Is it really a civilizing, enlightening mission of transforming brutes into human beings or making others as hypocritical and pretentious as the colonizing powers are, at the expense of personal integrity?

Keywords: Beast, Civilization, Dualities, Colonization, Self-exploration.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the author intends to explore why man is so bent upon destroying that hellish, instinctual, and violent aspect of his nature that binds him to the animal world. The social animal might have mastered innumerable expeditions and explorations, but when it comes to confronting a part of him that is essential to his identity, he chooses to remain somewhat aloof and contemptuous of that part and when given the opportunity, defies it with all his might in the fear of the ransacking of his so-called civilized garb. In the light of this proposition, two canonical works of Joseph Conrad and Herman Melville respectively, namely 'Heart of Darkness' and 'Moby Dick' were explored.

Purpose

The sterile hypocrisy of humanity is like a blight eating away at the very fibre of the cherished superficial beliefs and ideals of the so-called civilized individuals. Variety, versatility, and individuality is seen as a threat. An issue that troubles the contemporary scenario as well, is what with the worldwide competition between different nations and the struggle for supremacy and where one nation seeks to set exemplary status in the panels of history through its improved and evolving practices. Everyone wants to reach the perfection of Nietzsche's superman, but are they becoming mere archetypes and superficial machines in the process with the destructive intention of mechanizing

and standardizing everyone around them under the torch of Enlightenment and Civilization? In order to answer these queries, the texts of MD (*Moby Dick*) and HOD (*Heart of Darkness*) were selected as they are very pertinent in their motifs for catering to present day world issues.

Main Argument and Substantiation

The first aspect that would be analyzed is the beastly side of human beings that embarrass them and the one they would like to eradicate with all its contingent menial functions that link them with animals. A beast may be regarded as that 'other' of humanity that makes man flaunt his veneer of civilization like a peacock and defy any creature to equal his so-called progressive and urbane charms. Even darker human races have been subjected to the racial 'otherness' that dehumanizes them and denigrates them to bestial standards. So much so that some races are accused of sheer cannibalism, a crime that renders assault on them as justified. As Gina Wisker comments, "defining people as cannibals provides a moral justification for treating them as less than human" (16). The colonizer seizes at this heinous crime of gobbling human flesh and asserts the right of colonizing such non-human cannibal tribes with missionary zeal. This justification further accentuates the colonizing purpose by aligning the sublime ideal of mental enlightenment in addition to behavioural subjugation. However, Conrad in *HOD*, regards the cannibals in an appreciative light when Marlow, the narrator, is on board with cannibalistic natives numbering thirty as against five white missionaries; yet they cease from attacking the minority group of the crew, which makes Marlow wonder "Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear ---- or some kind of primitive honour?" (57). All these are essentially human characteristics and if the cannibals were showing restraint respecting their particular credo, then surely they can be regarded as more human than the forces that were shamelessly and viciously attacking them. The gap of epoch communications looms large as hostility prevails on both sides, and both regard the others as anomalies and supernatural aberrations. Signifiers and labels become ambivalent standards as the light of civilization hides a darkness of ulterior motives designed to subjugate natural forces. Stephen Regan comments in this

connection, "*Heart of Darkness* replaces the unknown with the unspeakable-instead of bringing light into darkness, it uncovers darkness at the heart of the 'civilising' mission" (508). The light/darkness duality can easily be swapped when the so-called dark and ignorant savages demonstrate a belief in their latent light, fundamental rights of survival and cherished credos and values. Melville's savage harpooners on the ship, Pequod, demonstrates a similar dignity and nobility in bearing despite cannibalistic tendencies. The holier-than-thou attitude of the civilized nations in their blindness of facts, figures and statistics falls a prey to generalizations and these generalizations are then used as a weapon on lands they have no claim to squander away. In the light of this argument, Wagenknecht has reflected on the personal voyages of Melville,

"Melville did admire wholeheartedly the mental and physical health of the islanders, their excellent dispositions, and their freedom from the vices of civilization, but he saw these things not as the spontaneous productions of "nature," but as the achievements of a social order which they had made, and which was right for them" (61).

Melville particularly was of the view that religious grounds of the missionaries were merely imperialist tools to gain an edge over lands rich in resources. Perhaps the natives were more human than the invading rampages of rapacious and apparently philanthropic crusaders. As Edinger showered his praises on the inhabitants of the Marquesas islands whom Melville had visited, "The natives of the Marquesas in many ways lived in the paradise state of Adam before the Fall – before instinct and spirit were wrenched apart and turned into deadly enemies in the human psyche" (10). The union of instinct and spirit only consummates a complete personality, and the psychological complications that plague the human race today are an inevitable aftermath of cruel repression of self-expression. The worst of it was that theoretical and religious ideals were leveled against these races strong in instinct and that repugnance for the animal was consummated in garnering plundered resources, hence an exhibition of the higher animals' superior strategy at progression. The colonizers were in fact, using the superficial concept of race as an imperialistic weapon to

capture and subjugate, not only the bodies, but also the psyche and soul of the darker races to drill in them a sense of their own inferiority. However, one cannot limit the psyche to morphological categories. Race is a deeper reality linked directly to every person's individuality, as "everyone is thought to experience race as an identity that comes from deep within: that is, as a natural expression of one's fundamental identity" (Malpas and Wake 128).

Every being is born with a state that is unharnessed, lawless, and unbound by social constructs- civilization only comes later as something imperative to chain that wild, beastly, free-flowing and limitless self. This beastly aspect of man is potent with a dynamic energy that can be channeled to achieve Maslow's self-actualization. For instance, in *HOD*, Kurtz's intended appears like a hollow artificially conditioned ragdoll when compared with the omnipotent fertility and prospects of the native female anima. C.B.Cox has drawn an apt analogy to Conrad's depiction of Kurtz's native woman and the European Intended, "If we compare this splendid savage with Kurtz's European fiancée, his Intended, it may seem that we are setting side by side dynamic energy with sterile hypocrisy, life with death" (Bloom 29). Kurtz's Intended, fashioned by the principles of what is expected of a woman in behaviour, resembles a costumed in-mourning puppet, while the awe-inspiring native woman, stretches her hands heavenwards, which reflects a totality of vision thwarted by the restricted standards of civilization. Just like the whale's greatness in *MD* is proved with its "pyramidal silence" (301), the mistress's greatness is expressed in her consonant silence with the wilderness. Empty vessels may make a lot of noise, just like the white civilized man blowing his trumpet of improvement and erudition, yet the true greatness lies in the potency of silence, when words are not needed to flaunt the reality, which expresses itself spontaneously in a natural pattern that cannot be evaded. Similarly, in *MD*, Queequeg the South Sea Islander, initially makes a very savage and hostile impression on Ishmael, almost as if he is a ferocious animal out of a zoo. D.H.Lawrence's witty comment encapsulates this animal impression as,

"There you are: you see Melville hugged in bed by a huge tattooed South Sea Islander, and solemnly offering burnt

offering to this savage's little idol, and his ideal frock-coat just hides his shirt tails and prevents us from seeing his bare posterior as he salaams, while his ethical silk hat sits correctly over his brow the while" (155).

This again reminds us of Conrad's natives whisking their posteriors like tails in *HOD*, "Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails" (30). It seems ludicrous that instead of recognizing the bond that unites us with them, they are looked upon as the very presentations of an unbred animal world. Ironically, Conrad's narrator Marlow deciphers inkling of the bond with these beastly creatures, "No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it --- this suspicion of their not being inhuman" (51). This suspicion paramounts to a self-knowledge that Kurtz had embraced but Marlow shrank back from it. Melville, however, allows his narrator Ishmael to realize the camaraderie that he shares with Queequeg, "No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits" (49). The world of the savages speaks plainly, while the social animal is enraged at the plain and unblemished image of their very selves which is deemed a weakness rather than a strength. Are the highly developed cerebral hemispheres of the human being merely indulged in learning acts of cunning to deceive and plunder rather than developing a real candour of accepting our instinctual side which is undeniably contingent? Derogatory terms and practices are churned up to hide man's essential bestial nature as Herman Melville comments in *MD*, "Cannibals? Who is not a cannibal?" (262). The civilized man with his insatiable lust for power harbours spiky fangs that qualifies him as a greater cannibal than the worst of the deprived.

Denying the animal spirit in us is like denying a gift that nature has bestowed upon us. Our heart and soul throb at one beat with nature. Herman Melville comments in his novel, "O Nature, and O soul of man! How far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! Not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind" (271). The essential design of every atom of matter has a

universal implication and functioning, that enables the natural cycle, however vicious, to go on invincibly. Such forces are never repressed without being sublimated into a more dangerous mould. For instance, Ishmael thinks somewhat like a racist in the chapter, "The Monkey-Rope" when he considers the African Queequeg to be the "previous image" (279) of the whites and in this way demeans the value of the African ways and values rather than acknowledging their integrity. The whale's ambergris and Congo's ivory become reality checks as the façade of colonization crumbles down in the face of grotesque egotistical and imperial designs to subjugate through unharnessed power. The materialistic concerns override humanist interests as profiteering figures prominently. This is illustrated by Stubb's remark in the chapter "The Castaway" that he makes to the little dark boy Pip, "a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama" (359). This means thereby that the human being becomes a commodity himself and as soon as Kurtz becomes aberrant in behavior and detrimental to the expansionist purpose of civilization garb, he is to be reclaimed as a useless bolt of the colonizing machinery. Kurtz's self-realization is incomprehensible to the well-bound world of definitions and limits. Melville remarks in *MD*, "So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic" (360). Ahab and Kurtz have reached a wavelength that is reason's insanity but of such profound potency, that mortal man with all his superficial limitations cannot grasp its essence. Ahab tries to convey his vision to his crew but they fail to understand. He categorically declares, "The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab" (373). In other words, Ahab's vision becomes synonymous with the universal reality behind matter and creation itself. Generally, man would shun it and be ashamed of the naked enormity that is a part of his constitution. Nevertheless he feels secure behind the erected pillars of society rather than assuming responsibility and recognition for his essential dark self. Kurtz makes a choice of nightmares, and Marlowe is overwhelmed by his honest choice, and yet when he lies to Kurtz's Intended, he re-

erects an illusion that ensures the false functioning of society and withdraws into the haven offered by the society's false pretences. This self-deception is a psychological necessity both for the Homo sapiens milieu and for the Intended, as they are too frightened to confront their own insanity. As C.B. Cox comments, "Kurtz is degraded, exalted, tragic; Brussels is civilized, hypocritical, dead" (Bloom 42). Like Kurtz, Ahab had also forsaken his better half, "that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow – wife?" (464). The security they found was not in their supposed soulmates, but by making stalemates of society's empty demands and coming to terms with their own dark and gruesome reality. The dark bond with nature is illuminated in an epiphany of self-reflection. Moby Dick is credited with a "malicious intelligence" (470) as if the wilderness harbours an "inscrutable intention" (Murfin 49). The design is universal and Ahab and Kurtz are artists in the sense that they hover along its multitudinous folds and whirls, participating not for commercial success, but to comprehend the masterpiece that is the universe itself.

We come to the social pillar of colonization in the name of civilization itself. The European nations with their superior economy and powerful weapons were in a propitious position to impose their hegemony over their helpless others. The superficial external marker of the white skin posited them as assumers of an innate superiority while true identity is something that originates from the latent personality. The mutual sense of alienation and defamiliarization surfaces when the intruders feel dislocated in a foreign land whose values and ideals of intellectual and moral development might vary from their own, while the natives feel overwhelmed by an invading power with ruthlessly destructive weapons. Darwin's model of man's evolution from the ape further unwittingly justified the white man's claim of moving from barbarity to civilization. To embellish this ideal, the white man worships superficial constructs that elevates him to an artificial pedestal, while tribes with hunched postures and primitive dances ironically justify their denigration and link with the ancestral ape. C.B.Cox asks an important question about Conrad's narrator Marlow, "Is wilderness the primary reality,

and Marlow's occupation on the steamboat merely an artificial fiction which conceals the truth from him?" (Bloom 33). Melville's protagonist Ahab's monomania is a threat to the integrity of an entire race that seeks to vanquish what it cannot understand by set parameters, standards and ideals. This imposition of a will of definitions is a violation of fundamental rights. However, colonizers forget that the teeming streams of nature when suppressed would lead to destructive consequences, while the fecund individuals like Melville's Queequeg, who befriend this spirit of nature, explore its utmost potentials. Edinger speaks of Queequeg as "a piece of primeval nature itself, a personification of the original whole man at home with nature and himself" (27). In other words, blocking this natural spout would be clogging and distorting of one's utmost capacity for self-actualization.

We must not forget that colonization leads to an inevitable postcolonial response. Postcolonialism roughly dates back to the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century. According to Gregory Castle, "Postcolonial refers to the unrepresentable in the colonial: racial difference, legal inequality, subalternity, all of the submerged and suppressed contradictions within the colonial social order itself" (135). The intensified decolonization of the imperialist factors was brought about by the suppressed and marginalized elements that were denied a right to express themselves and question their subjugation on their own lands. This hushing up of the assumedly inferior races reflected upon the primal threat incorporated in the sign language and cipher of the tribes that challenged the well-organized and instrumental social construct of the defined and labeled domain of the language of the colonizers, who through artful ingratiation and rhetoric, sought to brainwash the natives of the invaded lands. Race is taken as the basic constituent of one's fundamental identity, but what is race except a measurement of the degree of pigmentation of one's skin and then associating that darkness with the darkness of ignorance. In actuality, darkness pervaded in the very core of the presumably civilizing forces in the form of manipulation of local resources and disparaging the beauty of the invaded lands, thereby manifestly demonstrating the bestiality of the colonizing individuals themselves. Macbeth's witches'

apt cry can be quoted here, "fair is foul and foul is fair." Conrad viewed the annexing powers as "neither grand nor progressive but as absurd" (Stape 184). This is an immensely valid perspective because when one can't tolerate the ugly mirror image, one seeks to shatter that visage which appears absurd, repulsive and purposeless, but the roots of our constitution cannot be wrenched out of our beings.

Just observe one in a state of sheer anger when the last trace of restraint is gone, and the individual becomes very capable of inflicting harm on anyone in close proximity. Westerners' intolerance of their own bestial nature's existence reached its peak when they sought vent in acts of the vicious dimension of wrath and revenge against their weaker others. Western notions of identity were compellingly perpetuated by the white races in the process of domesticating their racial others. The cultural, religious, and intellectual achievements of the local and indigenous people were undermined solely because of their inferior progress in arms and weapons, not because they were less human than their white counterparts. Any attempt to repel this invading body was regarded as an exhibition of sheer brute force rather than an attempt at defence. Frantz Fanon considered that these races needed to assert their rightful demands for claiming their lands and culture which was a kind of "coherent, enlightened action of men and women" (204). It was necessary to establish an identity on the International domain, other than that of the subjugated slave. Establishment of identity lay in dynamic revolutions with purposeful criteria incorporated in arts and politics. Fanon regarded this constructive step as the "moving consciousness of the whole of the people" (204) that made them aware of their usurped rights and gave a direction to their emancipatory actions. Working at cross purposes with Fannon, Benjamin Kidd in his *The Control of the Tropics* went so far as to advise the white imperialists to restrain their operations in the primitive tribes, not on account of humanity, but on account of expressing concern for the purity and exaltation of the more evolved races that might be contaminated. Marginalization and cultural arrogance lead to the silence of the other, but that silence itself is threatening, foreboding muteness before a storm. Kurtz's wild mistress in the Belgian Congo seldom speaks anything

except inarticulate cries, but her gesture of reaching out swiftly towards the sky with her bare arms is representative of the wilderness's "tenebrous and passionate soul" (Murfin 76) that is like a latent giant pondering upon the overriding possibilities. The whale Moby Dick is like that latent giant. If language becomes a virus because it's a colonizer (Bennett and Royle 215), initially Ahab becomes the ruthless colonizer of Moby Dick's world and justifies his edifying mission of vanquishing the whale by piling "upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down" (160) and of course, the priceless ambergris. Similarly, Kurtz initial enterprise is to secure the ivory and to identify how savage and barbarous the local brutes are who can be reformed only by the use of force. Both are claimed by the nature's wilderness when their attempt to communicate is successful. Again, the rage and hate against creatures who dare to defy the white man's harpoon and whip for that matter are bound to catapult helplessly. In Melville, we see the oceanic world being colonized by Ahab's ship Pequod. Ambergris is the white man's ivories in this case, the blue depths are being exploited in the name of whaling, and Ahab seeks revenge from Moby Dick, the white whale. His mind is infected with the monomaniacal virus of destroying this monster with negative attributes of "great ferocity, cunning, and malice" (155) and he justifies his attack by imbuing Moby Dick with superhuman strength and destruction that needs to be countered at all costs. Kurtz seeks to exhibit skulls of exterminated brutes who dared to defy the presuming dominion. Both are destined to reach an indisputable truth about nature.

Colonizers forcefully impose their codes of conduct and rules on a foreign land without first indulging in the exploration and comprehension of the pre-existent codes and ethics of the natives living there. This colonial communication gap results in havoc for not only the natives, but the infrastructure of the superficial constructs of invading forces as well.

Language itself is a social construct and unfortunately, the animal world does not have to resort to the human way of communication. Hence, a similar communication gap exists between the Homo sapiens and other existent fauna.

The whaling industry parallels European and American territorial expansion, and in such mechanized and stereotypical missions, only the minds at par with the true human element can confront the reality of the superficial human endeavors. Countries like Britain itself were barbaric and savage during the Roman reign, and the colonizing powers that such countries became later were simply an excuse for revenge against the primal roots that they shared with these savages in order to remove the bane and legacy that mocked their civil attitude at all times. No matter how much of a teetotaler a person is, he has the capacity to be intoxicated like a drunkard and tempted like Adam. To err is human, but defining errors is a tricky business. One man's sanity is another man's hardcore lunacy. Education is one of the superstructures and important element of the various paraphernalia that the colonizers employed in order to maneuver the thinking of the colonized towards methodical and subtle subjugation. Religion is another institution that serves to invest naive minds with a dose of fatalism that steers believers towards a path of passive acceptance of injustice and hypocrisy as a built-in ingredient of fate. If primitivity is the thriving of essential human fertility and instinct, colonization serves to mechanize and dehumanize, refusing to recognize in the African life, a blood pact with the colonizers themselves.

This blood pact was an instinctual and primordial bond that delineated the chain of human generations. Instinct in the pure form was nothing but a grave threat to the artificial veneer of civilizations whose roots sprung from a primal allegiance with instinct itself. Religion and science became important tools for curbing the primal instincts and exercising restraint, in other words, harnessing the animal that rages in the blood of every human being. Religion and science justify the allegation of 'white man's burden' by placing on him an obligation of being the superior of creation and of possessing the exclusive physiological feature of highly developed cerebral hemispheres. Conrad, in an 1897 letter, categorically commented on humankind's painful consciousness of this animalistic and bestial tendency within themselves that led them towards a bloody rebellion and consequent tragic aftermath:

What makes humanity tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well, but soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife, the tragedy begins.²

A denial of the inherent instinct incorporated in the human constitution is an open invitation to destruction. Lawrence refers to *Moby Dick* as “the deepest blood-being of the white race; he is our deepest blood-nature” (169). Something that is a part of our blood, like the white blood cells themselves, is an integral part, and any attempt to eliminate this part would lead to a weakening of the human infrastructure, just as the so-called brutal instincts of the blacks were ingrained in the very essence of the white man. Thus we have Kurtz's moment of epiphany towards his demise when he cries out, “The horror, the horror!” (Murfin 85). This moment of illumination sheds light on the blood pact with the primitive that we have installed in our beings, and any attempt or gruesome mission to subjugate this essential wildness of nature would result in a sense of alienation and meaninglessness that surface in the form of Kurtz's apparent madness. In actuality, he had accepted the wilderness's claim over him, and recognized the bond that could not be severed. Kurtz, the emissary of science and propagator of the civilization ideals, was so overwhelmed with the latent potential and the enlightening influence of primitivity that, as an act of desperation he renounced the philanthropic ideology of the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs” (Murfin 65) to an anguished cry of ‘Exterminate all the brutes!’ (Murfin 66). This was a drowning man's desperate resort as Kurtz drowned in the ocean of self-discovery and the earliest beginnings of civilization were found trenchant in the heart of the assumedly most enlightened intellectual. Kurtz's mental territory had been remapped and colonised. But Kurtz rises in esteem simply because he becomes conscious of his own reality. Macbeth's overreaching ambition claims him a victim in much the same way as Kurtz and Ahab are claimed victims of their over-reaching ambition to impose their will over nature; the consequences will hardly spare them. The earlier generations may be murdered, but the gory consequences are the curse resulting from civilization's

denial of primitivity. Ahab comes to a similar realization towards the end of *MD*. He realizes that what he is grappling with is seeds of his own destruction as Starbuck rightly declares, “See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!” (488). His madness finds a meaning when he acknowledges his defeat in front of the invincible reality of the “all-destroying but unconquering whale” and identifies the universal bond that cannot be so insolently terminated when he orates, “Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool!” (492). The pool of origin and demise is the same, but civilized man in his hubris strives to rise above the grasping tentacles of the pool and defeat this instinctive bond with nature, but this hidden and repressed bond is bound to surface, wrecking a havoc-like whirlpool whenever the bond is disturbed. No wonder Freud's unconscious consists of mostly repressed desires of the id, whose latent energy can be tapped efficiently, but the social animal is extremely conscious and ashamed of this fundamental reality. As C.B.Cox says about Kurtz who “releases his id from European restraint; he is a pioneer in a psychic wilderness” (Bloom 40). Initially the slave of practical requirements of colonization, Kurtz rises to comprehension of his personality by understanding the laws that governed his being. He is reduced to the level of creatures that crawl on all fours, but he is never ashamed of it. Ahab is never ashamed of competing with the allegedly instinctual power of Moby Dick. Perhaps his perception reached beyond the limits of ordinary prescribed realities. Edinger professes, “Light is a kind of poison to darkness; consciousness by descending into the unconscious can transform it from within. This can happen, however, only when the conscious attitude is a heroic one and the ego descends into the unconscious purposefully” (38). Both Kurtz and Ahab are heroic characters and descend into their unconscious psyche. In fact, Ahab fomented by his monomaniacal desire of killing Moby Dick carries out the symbolic act of lowering his boat on the treacherous waters to indulge in the whale hunt. Symbolically interpreted, it can be taken as Ahab's descent into the whirlpool of his unconscious and to make sense of the overriding sense of malice and revenge against the animal that plagues his heart. The colonizers, apparent mission was to civilize and domesticate the brutes of Africa by giving them an

analogy to Darwin's apes, but their arrogant and holier-than-thou attitude showed disgust rather than a genuine concern for the colonized natives' development. Bennett and Royle make a pertinent comment, "There is a fundamental *ambivalence* in the act of colonial appropriation: the colonizer at once desires and fears that the colonized be like him (or, less frequently, her)" (220). The white colonizer secretly wishes for the imitation failure of his subjects, which would serve to establish his supremacy for times immemorial and give him a right to interfere in the suppressed lands' affairs. The imperial and colonial enterprise is certainly well improvised. The initial impression of Melville's narrator Ishmael about Queequeg was influenced by prejudiced notions of negro savages and even led him to think that Queequeg could be a "pedlar of heads too – perhaps the heads of his own brothers" (25). In much, the same way as the word Taliban would be equated with terrorists nowadays. The proprietor of the spouter-inn rightly retorts to Ishmael's fear: "Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian" (27). Later, the simple and honest soul of Queequeg touches him with the tangibility of a pure crystal and he decides: "I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy" (49). The sea in *MD* and the wilderness in *HOD* represent the independence of the soul of creation. The soul thrives in its pure form but bodily covetous constructs taint the supremacy of the soul's perfection. Melville says in *MD*,

"Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?" (95).

In other words, religion and rapacious materialism rob nature of its beauty of instinct, spontaneity, and balance. When Starbuck rebukes Ahab for risking their lives for the purpose of vengeance from a "dumb brute" who had attacked Ahab with the "blindest instinct" (143), Ahab reveals the layers of the working of nature, "in each event – in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask" (143). In

other words, nature could not always be taken for granted as a grand design was working behind it, and that grand design had cunning and intellectual acumen for perpetuation. For Ahab, Moby Dick was "outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it" (143). That inscrutable malice was what Ahab wanted to scrutinize, decode, and avenge.

If the presumably inferior races are subhuman and incapable of reasoning, they need looking after, and the whites assumed that uncalled-for responsibility in the name of sheer good will, humanity, and domestication. Frantz Fanon incisively discusses the matter in these words, the matter where the derogatory nigger "is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty and morality" (41). In other words, he is that wild and untamed tide of nature that must be harnessed at any destructive cost. Graham in his article, "Bloody Niggers", doubly emphasized the point when he regarded niggers as a polluting factor for the Chosen seed, which makes it a moral obligation to obliterate them in a permissible act of genocide. He believes that niggers should have no rights precisely because of the fact that they would manipulate those rights for destructive intent. Crain remarks of Melville's narrator, "Ishmael's first identifications of Queequeg are fallen categories, words defined negatively by how they fail to reach the standard of sober and pacific white Christian" (46). A man bound in the fallen category is culpable for the original sin and cannot be exonerated. The punishment meted out to such a man is considered justified. Such men are considered a threat to the restrained model glorified by almost all the religions of the world. However, why is it so dangerously singular on the side of the white man to ignore the codes and conducts that these other races nurture on their behalf, the one that gives them a code so strong that even hungry cannibals can restrain their ravaging appetites? Most books are cultural and patriarchal products, but Melville and Conrad have shown how revolutionary a book can get.

The traditional dualities become reversible ones in Melville and Conrad. The signifier and signified undergo a continual slippage. For instance, the blackness associated with evil

and malice in the Dark Continent becomes the darkness of the white people's corrupt tactics, while the whiteness of the whale is alluded to as encompassing a malice and dark intent that needs to be destroyed at all costs. Both viewpoints oscillate in narrow dimensions and harbour limited perspectives that turn the gluttonous table of human hubris. Lawrence perpetuates a universal significance of this viscosity between white and black duality, "Melville keeps up his disquisition about 'whiteness'. The great abstract fascinated him. The abstract where we end, and cease to be. White or black. Our white abstract end!" (160). Moretti comments on the limited stance of Ahab, the seeker of vengeance from his animalistic alterego, as, "His world is a closed and narrow one: made up of a single creature, in whose whiteness all the colours of the universe are concentrated — and vanish" (61). Truth is slippery, and it would be a vain attempt to grasp it with finality. Therefore, definitions and ideologies fail to fathom the depth of possibilities and potentials. It is because they are merely means of utility and wielding power, instruments to control not only society but also the natural world, and warfare is a contingent utility, which serves to further these devious ends. The blacks who were considered to be the "white man's burden"³ suffered immoral atrocities at the hands of the quest for colonial domination veiled in selfish ambition. Melville questions even the whiteness and purity of Christianity. Bildad, the bible-reading, self-righteous man feels no compunction in robbing Ishmael of his fair wages, while speaking verbose and pompous declarations of Christian belief. Queequeg, the savage on the other hand, demonstrates restraint and essential human kindness as Edinger points out: "This association of cruelty and evil with rigid, orthodox Christianity and of natural kindness with the non-Christian is a recurrent theme in Melville" (43). Conrad likewise points out the fickleness of Christian missionaries in his works like *HOD*. The Spanish Sailor on board the Pequod speaks denigratingly of the Negro Daggoo's race, "thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind – devilish dark at that. No offence" (153). That is right. First, subjugate the race to mockery and ridicule, and then manipulate words to justify your civilization by inviting no offence. The trump card is simply diplomatic acumen to gain domination. Pip the black boy also questions such hardcore racism by

addressing God thus: "Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!" (154). The God who created both white and black in the universal designs inevitably gave them a right to formulate their own codes of conduct and legislature. As Melville further comments, "all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within" (170). Nature is complicated and to harness it with defined civilization and superficial progress is to limit its potential and insult its depth. Whoever confronts this depth is charged with madness and nonconformity. Melville who himself had a personal encounter with whales gave an apt comment on their mental capability as "guided by some infallible instinct – say, rather, secret intelligence from the Deity—mostly swim in *veins*, as they are called;" (173). This infallible instinct, secret intelligence and perfect aim incited Ahab to eulogize Moby Dick as a worthy adversary. Writers like Oscar Wilde also condemn a view of the world strictly divided into binaries. In Oscar Wilde's novella, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry makes an apt commentary on the essence of human beings, "I wonder who it was defined man as a rational animal. It was the most premature definition ever given. Man is many things, but he is not rational" (154). Man might be an animal, but to affix reason and rationality with him would be a rigid folly. Later, the omniscient narrator of the novella reflects on the reversibility of animalism and spirituality,

"Soul and body, body and soul – how mysterious they were! There was animalism in the soul, and the body had its moments of spirituality. The senses could refine, and the intellect could degrade. Who could say where the fleshly impulse ceased, or the psychological impulse began? How shallow were the arbitrary definitions of ordinary psychologists! And yet how difficult to decide between the claims of various schools!" (179).

The pillars of society had definitely failed to provide a perfect comprehension and equilibrium to the human system precisely because of denial of certain inevitable characteristics of human nature. The body and soul principles were overlapping, and perhaps, a complete,

fulfilled individual was a balanced amalgam of both. Shallow and rigid delineations of natural functioning were liable to have a loose infrastructure that could collapse in the face of resurging sublimated desires and innate urges. In fact, whiteness depicts a poignant lack of meaning as too much can overwhelm the eyes with a blinding impact that confounds that scientifically trained senses. Whether the white whale is an allegorical embodiment of an obsolete God or the profitable commodity like territorial hegemony, it presents a blinding and formidable riddle in its silence and omnipotent caliber. The white albino whale Moby Dick can run adjacent to evil, reflecting upon the destructive aspects of nature that are inevitably imbibed in it along with good; just as Blake rightly identified both good and evil in the Creator's design. Yeats' concept of gyres is equally applicable here where the period of construction is eventually overlapped and overshadowed by an apocalyptic period of destruction. Edward Edinger stipulates, "Imagination and creativity are apt to seem Satanic, since in their very nature, they transcend the separation of the opposites" (118). Art goes beyond good and evil, therefore artists like Ahab and Kurtz appear to be evil because they have dissolved the Christian dissociation of good and evil and dared to transgress the bounds of normalcy to explore forbidden horizons. Ahab's reiterated dream of hearses signifies "the imminent death of some part of the personality, an old attitude" (Edinger 121). It is Ahab's journey towards developing the attitude he both desires and fears. Ironically, it is not the supernatural white being Kurtz that ensnares the natives, but a fellow being who adapted to the ways of the wilderness and the blood beating in his veins was a witness to his native connection. The heart of darkness that is latent in every pawn of humanity is flooded by the superficial veneer of civilization, but blinding floods are misleading and destructive, not enlightening. Charlotte Spivack's exploration of Jung's concept of the personality's dark side or shadow can aptly be related here: "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), and the precise reason that we want to hide these qualities

is because the hideous face of Shakespeare's Caliban is too much to face with temerity. No wonder at Kurtz's horrific recognition at the time of his demise that reflects Jung's belief as explored by Spivack, "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). This shattering experience is what the world would later label as lunacy. Richard Hughs puts in a word for Jungian insight, "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. However, 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). Such an omnipotent subconscious force needs a matching courage and receiving capacity, which is always at daggers drawn with society's merciless thwarting. Nevertheless, it is a visionary journey that leads to self-revelation and confrontation with the potential hell within each individual, which he is taught to despise through social conditioning. Recognizing yourself as an individual rather than a puppet is an illumination that helps in differentiating and classifying of knowledge that is far superior to artificial constructs of conditioned learning.

Ahab and Kurtz are the protagonists who are lucky enough to confront the horror. For Ahab, the sperm whale becomes the symbol of the possibility of accomplishing utmost human authority and absolute control. If the sperm whale is subjugated, an unfathomable power is to be attained. For Kurtz, the wilderness and its inhabitants represent a similar potential for power realization. Through his lofty ideals and training, he sought to impart an aesthetic education to these racial others, but the language of the wilderness was a bigger adversary than he had bargained for. He gradually evolved a hybrid identity, as he was overcome by the myriad possibilities of the wilderness and the limited and confined perspective of his brought up; the company was unable to cope with the plethora of images and abstract ideas that nature has in its clutches. Melville declares in *MD*, "Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him,

i.e., what is called savagery" (237). So Christianity and civilization are the corrupting and deluding influences that rob man of his original identity and that lead him to the dilemma of the identity crisis that Ahab and Kurtz find themselves in. They remove the shackles of societal control to engage in an epic, timeless endeavor with themselves that proves to be a worthy exertion for self-revelation. As Edward Edinger has specified, "The conscious personality must separate itself from its origins if it is to achieve some measure of autonomy" (51). That autonomy is denied to the ordinary individuals who are afraid to let their imaginations explore the world and infinity around them. By making a choice of nightmares, Ahab and Kurtz embrace their creative powers to assume a godly autonomy that enables them to experience mental images untainted by social restraints and taboos. They have abandoned the collective human enterprise and become enterprising in their own endeavors to realize themselves by removing blinding safeguards between them and the epiphany of primitive enlightenment. Instead of defining images meaningfully, Ahab and Kurtz become identified with their solitary perceptions. As Edinger declares, "Rational consciousness acknowledges its impotence, and the autonomous complex personified by Ahab rushes towards its resolution" (72). A natural flow of a stream cannot be thwarted by artificial means. Ahab and Kurtz become not insane and malfunctioning, but tragic figures. They become transcendental romantic towers who strive to assert their individuality in the face of calculated planning and overbearing European hegemonic tactics. They are destroyed at the end but never defeated like Hemingway's Santiago in *Old Man and the Sea*. It is because like Santiago, they remained true to their vision. They are not heartless lunatics but feeling human beings, who reach a transcendentalist integration of their personalities through reconciliation of opposing facets of their personality. The wilderness claims Kurtz as its "spoiled and pampered favourite" (Murfin 64) while the whale drags Ahab like a mother figure to the womb of the sea with the rope functioning as a primordial umbilical cord. Thus comes the possibility of rebirth and redefining in universal terms with harmonizing of dualities. Kurtz and Ahab are the realities of the human condition upon which civilizing forces drape

illusory and ephemeral moral configurations that are rotten at the core. Ahab and Kurtz represent the first hand experience of how flowery and idealistic ideologies mirror a revealing darkness that explains our eccentricities and caprices of behavior. They transcend the subject-object and domination-repression duality and incorporate an enlightened vision that is deliberately misinterpreted as lunacy by artificial western standards and normative shackles. Shakespeare's affinity bears gigantic importance in recognizing the link between genius and insanity, "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/ Are of imagination all compact".⁴ Meisel remarks about Kurtz, "There is no central thread in the weave of the evidences that constitute his character, much less no deep center to his existence as a surface of signs" (25). The gap between the rigid signifiers and the ever slipping and oscillating signifieds is so like a gulf that cannot be surmounted by surface definitions and facts.

Recommendations

Humankind needs to realize that there is an essential vacuum and ambiguity in the profiteering way of life that follows, that the 'survival of the fittest' formula abnegates the essential element that defines different human beings. The result is that the essential vitality which holds together Humankind and nature as united entities with a single, unpolluted and unrestrained soul is severely tarnished, and we become mere slaves of our lusts, coining words, phrases and indictments to hold any socially antagonizing force in check. Writers like Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad guide us towards important journeys of self-exploration on the medium of water, that is fluid, dynamic, and adaptable, and that takes us to the mysterious, the occult, the primitive and the original that defines not only the human constitution but the wilderness around us which we have tamed with our civilizing ferocity. But what we need and what I recommend is, riding the wild waves and ebbs of nature with the same abandon, flow and vitality with which we came into the world. The question arises as to what would become of all laws, canons and ideologies that keep the erroneous nature of mankind in check? The answer is simple. We are not programming human beings or animals to 'act' in a certain way which might easily be called as hypocritical, but we are giving them a freedom of

choice. That might be a choice of nightmares as Conrad says; that might be facing the absolute reality of death as Melville states- whatever dimension we proceed towards, we have to make an existential choice ourselves; some dimension that defines us as our real selves and not as replicas or imitations of a social group. For a savage, a civilized person's behaviour might be anomalous and antagonistic to his credo and vice versa. The answer lies in toleration and admittance of variety and recommendation of a world scenario where atleast individual liberty is respected at all costs, and realization of a true democracy, which is yet to be tangibly grasped.

Implications

Two contemporary examples were presented. One is that of Russia trying to control its trade monopoly by restricting the import of foreign goods and also to make an ego statement of an ex super-power before the world that it knows how to survive and assert an identity. It is like the injured Ahab whose leg was severed by the monarch of the sea, the whale (another superpower). The repercussions of the Russian act would be dealt within the light of the choice that was made. Similarly, in Pakistan today, the Independence Day, the 14th of August 2014, I see not the celebration of the Independence Day, but the narrative of Independence itself being challenged with various political parties, upholding their various ideologies and slogans and carrying their multitudes of banners challenging the Elections of the Present Government through the choice of marching on roads, as the judiciary failed to satisfy them. The question pops in my mind, that if these parties and their supporters are frustrated to the last straw limit, would they turn into brutes and savages? Would they go for a bloody revolution in the footsteps of their Russian brethren if we take the mankind as a universal brotherhood? Would this choice be justified in the attainment of justice? Of course not. It would be more like a clash of fundamentalisms or a power struggle doomed to sprout further dissent. The Prime Minister is being accused of Imperialist designs to establish a monarchy and something must be done imperatively. The true ideal of democracy here depends on a good choice. Violence is not the answer. A reform in the election system according to

International standards is.... That international standard, must be, for all mankind, based on principles of individual toleration and self-abnegation. When such selfish aims and hypocritical manipulation is removed, only then will a person be judged on his pure merit_ that is the merit of his pure, unpolluted self.

Conclusion

The main characters of HOD and MD are important as they show this tussle of dualities: good vs evil, primitive vs civilized, light vs dark and self vs other. The role of motivation, choice, and intention is important. Kurtz denigrates to his primitive self as he decides to confront the nightmare of origin within him_ he came to civilize the wilderness. The wilderness claims him as his own and welcomes his choice of succumbing to its charms. Ahab in MD, on the other hand, seeks to harness the mammoth whale, but is caught in the loophole of his own hubristic choice and dragged towards the very darkness of the deep sea. An important lesson however is learnt and that is: the world is not starkly divided into white and black. The signifiers do not always indicate their assigned signifieds. Rather, an individual is a complex creature with a plethora of identities. It is his choice that determines unleashing of his psychic wilderness in the form of his 'id'. A love for society motivates him place a mask over the inner truth, but repression leads to anomaly too. We need a spout for personal expression and that comes out, if not through our behaviours and rituals, then through our words. But even if those words are shackled, the silence is pregnant with meaning: Ahab with his brooding stare, the wilderness with its undecipherable intention and Kurtz with his regressed primitive four-legged gait cry out a message which is pertinent to every race, creed and epoch: No one can define or limit any being. It is in coming to terms with our dualities and complexities that we embrace the fullness of our beings and existence. Instead of marginalizing in a domain of 'others', we need to recognize that 'other' as a significant part of our personality and this inspiring impulse completes our sketchy perception of ourselves and others.

End Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 1, Line 10.

2. Cited in <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Joseph_Conrad> 5 Nov. 2008. 10 May 2010.
3. White man's burden: Famous hymn for US imperialism by English poet Rudyard Kipling in 1899, that became a popular clichéd expression.
4. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5, Scene 1, Lines 7-8.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sumbal Maqsood is currently a Lecturer in English in Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan. She has been working there since 2008. She studied at the same university with a gold medal in Masters of English and 3.48 GPA in M.Phil in English. Her areas of interest are Gothic Novel, Poetry and Postcolonial Literature.

