Constructions of Totalitarian Subjectivity in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

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❖ ABSTRACT

The aim of this essay was to investigate Marlow's desire for constructing enlightenment subject of knowledge and power sustained by the collusion of imperialism and patriarchy in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's narrative, based on his journey up the river in Africa to retrieve Kurtz, attempts to conceptualize himself as the subject of the enlightenment reason and rationality. In the novella, collusive network of ideologies of empire and gender contributes to the making of a Western Enlightenment subject. Marlow eulogizes himself for realizing the harsh realities of imperialism, political domination and economic exploitation of the natives in Africa. However, Marlow is a colonial subject who has been ruled by the hierarchical system of thought in the Western logocentrism. He is not aware that his narrative has already been infiltrated by the ideological discourse of the totalitarian enlightenment. His narrative in effect is not a self-congratulatory testimony to truth and realities but a narcissistic and self-defeating document. Marlow unconsciously employs the totalitarian ideologies of empire and gender in order to relegate the African natives to the inhuman existence and to consign women to the sphere of illusion.

Key Words
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, totalitarianism, ideology, subjectivity

I. Introduction

Discussing the issue of Charlie Marlow's descriptions of women in *Heart of Darkness*, most of the commentaries have criticized Marlow's misogynist's view of women. For instance, Nina Pelikan Straus asserts that "the artistic conventions of *Heart of Darkness* are brutally sexist," pointing out the exclusion of women from the knowledge shared by men. (125). Joyce Carol Oates argues that Conrad's narratives tend to delineate a female character as someone "who effaces herself completely, who is eager to sacrifice herself in an ecstasy of love for her man" (84). In a similar vein, Edward Said notes that Conrad uses as one of the organizing substances for his narrative, "the women that drew men to chance and romance" (106). While many commentators have focused their attention on Conrad's problematic stance of sexuality, how Conrad dramatizes the erasure of women's voice and their existence, John Peters directs his critical attention to the narrator Charlie Marlow and provides a unique analysis of the text by suggesting that the novella portrays Marlow's ambivalence toward the world of women: "While Marlow considers the world of women to be delusional, he also considers it to be a place of refuge from an otherwise desolate existence" (93). Peters' argument is quite helpful in examining why Marlow holds and expresses the anti-feminist views in his narrative; Marlow seeks to establish a locus of "ontological comfort" in the world of women where he believes he can find a sanctuary from chaos and disorder of the outside world (95). By too much emphasizing the ontological and metaphysical significance of Marlow's narrative and his action in the course of his journey up the African River, however, Peter oversimplifies the workings of the protagonist's patriarchal ideologies of gender inextricably bound up with the European imperialist's discourse of Africa. Rather than following the essentialist's interpretation of the novella, reading it "a series of Marlow's progressive initiations (...) to amplify or complicate [his] internal process of moral discovery" (Watt 217-18) or "a journey to discover the nature of the universe" (Peters 89), I would like to interpret Marlow's narrative as an attempt to construct

the self of knowledge and power corroborated by ideological collusion of imperialism and sexism. In so doing, I will argue that the imperialistic and patriarchal ideologies revealed in Marlow's narrative manifest his desire for constructing the Enlightenment subject, a subject of totalitarian ambitions for controling and silencing others. In order to unravel the despotic nature of the modern subject, it is essential to examine the political and intellectual context of a critique of a conspiracy between the enlightenment and imperialism. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno assert that "Enlightenment is totalitarian" (4), since it subjugates all things to a system of calculability, utility, and unity under the proviso that anthropomorphic properties of human beings must be projected to natural phenomena: "Man's likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the lordly gaze, in the command" (6). Horkheiemer and Adorno aver that although reason has its best intention to liberate human beings from irrationality, it ironically can be changed into a form of instrumental rationality enough to lead the individual subject to establishing a complicity with tyranny and domination.

The project of the western civilization to achieve a universal deployment of reason deteriorates into the grand project of involving universal truth-claims with European imperialism. In criticizing the collusion of European knowledge and power, Michel Foucault declares that the Enlightenment is "an event, or a set of events and complex historical processes" which include "elements of social transformation, types of political institution, forms of knowledge, projects of rationalization of knowledge and practices, technological mutations" (43). According to Foucault's insight into the Enlightenment reason as an organized combination of all kinds of discourses, the Western subject imbricated within the closed discursive system of the collusive operations of power and knowledge becomes an agent who serves to expand economic domination and political hegemony over the non-Western world. The Foucauldian idea that the history of the European sciences firmly based on the autonomy of reason entails a history of dogmatism and despotism grounded on the affirmation of universal reason may support Slavoj Žižek's

notion of totalitarianism as prohibition against critical thinking: “the notion of ‘totalitarianism’ (...) is a kind of stopgap: instead of enabling us to think, forcing us to acquire a new insight into the historical reality it describes, it relieves us of the duty to think, or even actively prevents us from thinking” (*Totalitarianism* 3), and political “totalitarianism is grounded in phallo-logocentric metaphysical closure” (*Totalitarianism* 5). Thus, by applying the Foucault-Žižek connection to the context of European imperialism, one can argue that totalitarian working of the Enlightenment reason within the closed system of hegemonic discourses props up the Europeans’ imperialistic and androcentric domination over the non-Europeans.

My interpretive orientation toward ideologies embedded in the narrative of the story seems to be in line with Johanna M. Smith's attempt to reveal "collusive imperatives of empire and gender" (189). Marlow’s narrative strives not only to colonize the African world but also pacify the female characters. However, Smith does not mention the underlying logic of totalitarianism beneath the ideologies of empire and gender. In order to uncover the nature of ideological entanglement repressed in his narrative, it is quite important to note that Marlow uses his narration as the representation of reality, the ways in which he constructs his observation. Indeed, Marlow’s tale is dubiously problematical in that it misappropriates alterity of objects he observes. The central form of his narrative is a kind of travelogue in which, as Chinua Achebe notes, “Travellers with closed minds can tell us little except about themselves” (791). Achebe’s claim of traveller’s self-absorbing interpretation of others endorses Žižek’s argument that the subject of knowledge actually addresses “a symbolically articulated knowledge ignored by the subject” (*Event* 9); the interlocutor unwittingly reveals one’s ideological unconscious which is constructed by power relations. Similarly, Bette London emphasizes the effect of ideology on the construction of reality, arguing that "the construction of the white male speaking subject as narrative authority" determines Marlow's observation of the world as well as his narrative of the world. London’s commentary on the centrality of Marlow as the enunciating subject entails

a discussion of how much Marlow manipulates the realities of empire and gender through his narrative. Besides, it bolsters Fredric Jameson's argument that history is "an absent cause" which can be accessible only "in textual form" and through "narrativization in the political unconscious" (35). In this regard, Marlow, as the speaking subject who conveys his tale to the hearers on *The Nellie*, shapes a history of his journey up the African river in a form of narrative. His tale, therefore, consists of discursive language uttered by a speaking subject whose political unconscious, above all, is coterminous with his ideologies intertwined with the discourses of gender and empire.

II. Collusion of Imperialistic Idea and Narcissistic Representation

At the beginning of his narrative Marlow conceives of idea as the principal crux of imperialism. Although imperialism resorts to brutal violence for the purpose of exploiting the African natives' land, Marlow tries to foreground the altruistic idea of the Enlightenment which, he believes,

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. (7)

To adopt Robert J. C. Young's definition of the two terms, colonialism and imperialism, the plunder's real practices of exploiting and dominating the subjugated people — the "conquest of the earth" above passage — is essentially characterized in colonialism, while "an idea" lurking behind colonialism can be referred to as ideology working in imperialism: "Unlike colonialism, imperialism is driven by ideology and a theory of sorts" (27).

In the novella, Marlow's aunt, who helps Marlow to get his appointment in the Company, lets him recognize that he serves as a sort of Western missionary worker equipped with the Western ideals of the Enlightenment, heading toward the non-Western world: "I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle" (12). The image of light is a key to understanding both the nature of the European Enlightenment project in Africa and Marlow's characterization of himself as the mouthpiece of the project. While addressing to the hearers that his journey seemed to "throw a kind of light" on everything about him and into his thoughts, Marlow also regards himself as a purveyor of truth and knowledge to the auditor: "I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you" (7). He is a speaking subject who presumes to know better than the others; he implicitly proclaims intellectual ascendancy over the listeners enough to silence them. Marlow's narrative is figuratively compared to the likeness of "misty halos," and it is "accepted in silence" (5). Not only does his narrative discourse serve as a vehicle for making a mystery of the meaning of his tale, but it also transforms him into an iconic figure of sublimity. When he begins to recount his tale, Marlow assumes "the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes" (6). One may resist reading the religious imagery of Marlow as a representation of his self-absorption by saying that "Conrad rescues his novella from the easy satisfaction of the allegorical fantasy typical of the narcissistic colonialist text" (JanMohamed 89). However, we should not overlook the solipsism embedded both in Marlow's narrative and in the description of the religious posture. As if he were mesmerized by Marlow's tale like other listeners surrounding Marlow, the anonymous primary narrator expresses reverence for and awe at Marlow by comparing him to such a mystical and iconic figure as Buddha. However, Marlow successfully makes the primary narrator believe that he is an experienced sage who is fully aware of the political and economic machinations of European imperialism as well as the realities of African jungle.

Marlow himself is a subject bound by the colonialist's desire for economic and political domination masked by the humanitarian Enlightenment ideas.

Marlow's emphatic comment on the idea in the imperialist project also underscores the value of what he calls "efficiency—the devotion to efficiency" (6). Marlow accentuates the ideals of the humanitarian Enlightenment that the European imperialists can civilize the African natives and improve the qualities of their life, just as his aunt calls attention to the European Company's project of "weaning those ignorant millions [the African natives] from their horrid ways," but he also recognizes that the Company has been "run for profit" as well (12). The episode of Fresleven presents a gap between what the European imperialists fantasize the natives and what really happened at the moment of their encounter with them; although the Danish imperialist Fresleven initially set foot in an African village with "the noble cause" to civilize the natives, he aggressively asserted his "self-respect" when he believed that he had been treated wrongly by the village chief in the bargain of two black hens: "he whacked the old nigger mercilessly while a big crowd of his people watched him" (9). The cause of progress Fresleven upheld in effect was frustrated by his own desire for securing his own self, suppressing the voice of the natives. The European's noble cause to cultivate the wilderness and to inculcate the natives with the ideas of the European civilization ironically brought about his own death — the chief's son killed Fresleven with a spear — and his remains were found in the wilderness.

The opening paragraph of Kurtz's report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs stresses the necessity for the white Europeans to assume the role of God that will provide the natives with the enlightened benefits. However, the ideology lurking behind the humanitarian project is actually a self-justifying rhetoric of conquest: "we whites (...) must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings—we approach them with might as of a deity (....) By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded" (50). In examining the imperialists's arbitrary distortion of Christianity in perpetuating their exploitation of Africa, Hannah Arendt argues that the white Europeans, while practicing foreign domination over the Africans, simultaneously recognize themselves as more than human

beings and as God's chosen people, so that they can appear to be "the gods of black men" (195). Arendt goes on to say that the Europeans firmly believe that they are God's chosen people not for the purpose of divine salvation of human beings, but for "the lazy domination over another species that was condemned to an equally lazy drudgery" (195). The Arendtian analysis of race and imperialism reveals that the European imperialists have an ideology of domination over the natives under the pretext of spiritual salvation and cultural enlightenment. In the early stage of his journey up the river, Marlow witnesses a scene where a European with a uniform jacket hoists his rifle to his shoulder and forces six black men chained to carry baskets full of soil on their heads. Observing the white supervisor's glance and grin, Marlow in effect identifies himself with him, acknowledging both that he is entitled to the god of black men and that he makes a collusive agreement with the European imperialism: "After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings" (16).

The nature of work Marlow attempts to complete in Africa under the banner of the humanitarian Enlightenment is in stark contrast to the realities of work in an actual situation where the Europeans make inroads into the African land, exploit the natives' labor, and utilize it as a means of accumulating the colonizers' own profits. In this process, the natives become "nothing earthly now, nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom" (17). Here Marlow uses the images with impersonal and inanimate quality to represent Africans as the Other, which, as Paul B. Armstrong points out, reflects "a pervasive state of cultural solipsism" embedded in his travel narrative (430). Without reciprocally communicating with the natives of his observation, Marlow runs the risk of making his self-enclosed and one-sided representation of others natural, evident, and truthful.

A first-class agent's idea that Marlow belongs to "the new gang — the gang of virtue," reflects a change of official colonial policy in history. The Europeans' humanitarian gesture toward the African natives, as Chris Bongie points out, might suggest the New Imperialism of the late nineteenth century in terms of "a process of rationalization"; the renewed colonial

policy was marked by a shift from "an enlightened despotism" into "an even more luminous paternalism" (275). However, this altruistic ideology of imperialism still entails the brutal conquest of colonialism, as suggested in the footnote of the last page of Kurtz's report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (50). Labeling the natives both "the helpers" (17) and "rebels" (58), Marlow not only conceives of them as the residual things to be wasted and to perish after their service to the European colonizers' project of progress, but also categorizes them as a horde of irredeemable enemies and criminals who would stand up against "an August Benevolence" of the European Enlightenment philanthropists-cum-colonizers (50).

Marlow seems to be aware of the imperialists' rhetoric of exploitation and control under the mask of philanthropy, especially when he returns to Brussels, the sepulchral city after the event of his encounter with Kurtz in the Inner Station. The sepulchral city, a locus of the Company's profit-driven hegemonic governance, interconnects imperialism with Marlow and Kurtz. In the narrative, the city incessantly produces the discourse of mystifying conquest as humanitarianism, dispatches a new gang of virtue like Marlow to the jungle in Africa in order to retrieve Kurtz, and protects the overall system of imperialism from the idiosyncratic and godlike figure in the jungle, who challenged the authority of corporate's desire, engaging in "the gratification of his various lusts" (57). Marlow expresses disdain for the European imperialists' deceptive strategies for conquering Africa and their false consciousness of realities in Africa.

> They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance. (70-71)

Although Marlow's self-assurance reflects his knowledge of the real motives of Company business both at home and in Africa, such as moral degradation, atrocities, and economic exploitation under the facade of Western imperialistic ideology, he is ignorant of the fact that his self-proclaimed articulation of enlightened wisdom and insight into the nature of imperialism has been made possible in the matrix of power relations between the colonizing master and the colonized slave, the observer and the observed, the knower and the known, and the narrator and the listener. Due to Marlow's lack of reciprocity or his one-sided response to the other, his narrative is, as Armstrong notes, "a calculated failure to depict achieved cross-cultural understanding" (431). In his narrative where he attempts to debunk the myth of the European imperialism, Marlow in particular divulges the hierarchical modus operandi of the Western civilization, but the raconteur simultaneously holds epistemological supremacy over the voices of the Other in the course of his narcissistic reframing of his experiences in Africa.

III. Totalitarian Appropriation of Women

The totalitarian system of the European imperialism works by the ethics of sexual repression as well as the ethics of racial domination. Just as his narrative consigns the African natives to the inhuman existence in accordance with the hierarchical system of Western logocentrism, so Marlow constructs his own narrative with masculinist rhetoric by which he restricts the female characters to the instrument of the gratification of male desires. Dipesh Chakrabarty's contention that European imperialists were likely to reduce the idea of human beings to "the figure of the settler-colonial white man" can be rephrased in such a way that the white European imperialists are courageous, challenging, efficient, and productive, whereas the colonized natives are subjugated, subhuman, and disposable (5). In putting the spotlight on the aforementioned visions and qualities attached exclusively to white masculinity, Marlow's narrative reveals its gender-biased nature along with its racial prejudice. In the case of the

young Marlow's decision to explore Africa, he adopts an analogy of a man's fascination with the female body in explaining the contours of the continent on the map: "It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving" (8). Here Africa is figuratively represented as the object of male domination, both sexual and political.

Marlow's narrative portrayal of women is not simply descriptive but charged with masculine ideology of gender, since it adopts the symbolic image of the evil spirits, animalism, and lechery in delineating the African woman, Kurtz's concubine at the Inner Station, who appears when Kurtz is being carried onto Marlow's boat:

> A wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman (....) She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress (....) The immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (60)

It is quite interesting to see the similarity between Marlow's description of Kurtz's African mistress and his impression of a complicity between the Company's imperial policy and Marlow's engagement with it. An ideological collusion between empire and gender is quite explicitly suggested in Marlow's rhetorical strategies: "It is strange how I accepted this unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms" (67). The word "tenebrous" does not only highlight the mysterious darkness of the African continent, but it also devalues the natives in the continent by putting them in the inferior position according to the hierarchy of binary opposition employed in the Western value system: light vs. darkness, civilization vs. savagery, and man vs. woman. Although Marlow adopts the word "phantoms" in order to taunt the image of Europeans' avaricious desire for materials and profit yielded in Africa, he demotes the African

woman to nothing, a lack of substance, and an invisible and potential threat to the material civilization. Such words in Marlow's vocabulary are deeply intertwined and applicable in his representation of both empire and gender.

Marlow's detailed description of Kurtz's African concubine's ivory ornaments besides other decorations must be noted — "She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her" (60) — because it implies Marlow's comprehension of woman's body as "commodified," that is, "the thing on which 'value' is displayed" (Smith 194). By making her materialized with ivory, Marlow transforms Kurtz's African mistress into a reified figure who becomes a continuum to Kurtz's insatiable desire for ivory. Without any further explanation of her identity in Marlow's narration, she is simply depicted as a commodified fetish to keep Kurtz's desire for possession stimulated and invigorated. She appears to be a symbolic substitute for the dying colonialist's aspiration for domination and exploitation: "This lot of ivory now is really mine" (73). For Kurtz, his African mistress with ivory ornaments can serve as a means by which he conceals the debilitating knowledge of his own disempowerment or a fear of the natives' rebellious threat to his authority, so he attempts to disavow the loss of his power by displacing the knowledge onto his concubine, who are perceived as lacking and subordinate.

Ivory is both a fetishized signifier and an object causing desire. In the novella, ivory functions both as the object of capitalist's economic desire and Kurtz's libidinal desire for woman. The subtext of the narrative plot in effect orchestrates how Kurtz's private sexual desire for woman is combined with imperialist corporate's desire for ivory. The main reason for Kurtz's going to Africa or for Kurtz's decision to become an imperialist is that he wanted to get out of poverty which was a major hindrance to his union with his Intended. Near the end of his narrative, Marlow makes a remark about the reason: "I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something [....] He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there" (75). Therefore,

ivory is an emblem of imperialism which bears witness to the interdependence of one's psychic desire for love and the social needs for profit. For Marlow, Kurtz's African concubine with ivory ornaments is a testimony to both Kurtz's economic success in close liaison with bureaucratic imperialism and an object to satisfy his psycho-sexual desire. Marlow's narrative fixation on her adornments silences her only by highlighting masculinist's discourse of the tightening bond between male desire for sexual gratification and male desire for economic success.

Marlow's conversation with his aunt before he sets out on his journey to Africa also indicates his masculinist's view of reality and truth. Rather than fully conceding to his aunt's idea that the Company's project will civilize the savages, Marlow ridicules her ignorance of the economic motive of the Company's imperial plan. He says:

> It's queer how out of touch with truth women are! They live in a world of their own and there had never been anything like it and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over. (12-13)

Here Marlow still demonstrates his belief in Western logocentrism on the basis of hierarchical system of thoughts by categorizing male and female in terms of value judgment and the recognition of reality. For Marlow, his aunt's remarks about the Company's humanitarian approach to Africa reveal nothing but "womanly idealism"; his response to her opinion is, on the contrary, the truth-telling firmly based on his own experience, "manly realism" (Smith 198). Marlow's self-awareness of truth and reality actually reflects his male chauvinistic attitude toward woman by equating the female sphere with the world of "too beautiful" illusion, as opposed to the male sphere as the realm of truth confirmed by experience. In this regard, no wonder, Marlow expresses his loyalty to Kurtz to the last, since Marlow believes that Kurtz's last words — "'The horror! The horror!'" — epitomize the imperialist's last cry from his recognition of realities

in the African jungle, quite apart from the beautiful world in his aunt's vision (69). Before he goes to meet Kurtz's Intended, Marlow says:

> He had summed up — he had judged. "The horror! He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth—the strange commingling of desire and hate (....) Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory. (70)

The last episode in the novella, Marlow's encounter with Kurtz's Intended, not only re-affirms his credence to men's sphere in which male experiences validate the truth and ascertain the order of things, but it also addresses Marlow's ideological representation of women's sphere where female fantastic illusion of the world makes women blind to men's insightful knowledge of truth. Marlow depicts Kurtz's Intended in terms suggestive of idealism: "This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me" (74). However, his idealistic portrayal of Kurtz's Intended is Marlow's despotic attempt to ignore, trivialize, and humiliate women by conceiving of idealism as "weak, unhealthy and corrupted" (Hawthorn 185). Marlow's lie to her regarding Kurtz's last word is the consequence not of his sensitive regard for her feeling but of his desire for isolating the woman from the male's concrete experience. By telling a falsehood to woman, "Marlow brings truth to men" (Straus 130). At the final scene, Marlow's posture of a meditating Buddha surrounded by silent listeners would reveal the unity of male community in their sharing claims to truth. Here, as the knowing subject, Marlow appears to be the voice of patriarchal authority that suppresses African female identities and relegates European women to the realm of idealism governed by gender ideology.

IV. Conclusion

Marlow's narrative is narcissistic and self-absorptive, not only because the observer of the travelogue has a difficulty in holding the objectivity and the comprehensive knowledge of the events, but also because Marlow, as the speaking subject, cannot be immune from the influences of imperialist's ideology and gender ideology. He is the elocutionary subject who does not know how his knowledge is constructed, although he self-confidently says that he knows what others do not know. The subject matter Marlow employs for the construction of his narrative is a history of imperialism essentially congealed in the events of meeting Kurtz and fetching him from the jungle in Africa. The surface meaning of Marlow's tale, however, contains the underlying implication of how he conveys his narrative to the listeners. This argument in effect brings about the issue of how Marlow's subjectivity is constructed. In the course of his journey up the river, Marlow describes his impression of Africa in terms of mystery, illusion, and fear: "We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glide past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse" (35). Marlow frames his impression and observation of the African natives in terms of mysticism and madness. Here his narrative reflects the imperialist's ideology of race on the grounds that the European civilization has a noble mission to cultivate the savages in the dark and mysterious continent, and that the European settlers' political domination over the savages and economic exploitation must be justified and pardoned for accomplishing beautiful cause of humanitarian philanthropy. And yet, Marlow uses the words associated with hallucination to reveal his gender ideology when he contrasts male knowledge of truth and harsh realities in the jungle with female ignorance of the realities. In doing so, he restricts the female characters to the closed system of signification, the female sphere of illusion, dream, and fantasy.

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❖ 국문초록

죠셉 콘래드의 『어둠의 속』에 나타난 전체주의적 주체성의 형성

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본 논문은 죠셉 콘래드의 『어둠의 속』에서 중심인물인 말로우가 자신의 아프리카 탐험을 바탕으로 한 서사를 통해서 스스로를 서구 계몽주의의 합리적 이성주체 그리고 진리주체로 드러내고자 하는 시도를 하고 있음을 고찰하고자 한다. 작품에서 제국주의 이데올로기와 성 이데올로기는 서구 계몽주의 합리적 이성주체를 구성하는 데 작동하고 있다. 말로우는 아프리카에서 커츠를 만나러 가는 여정과 그와의 만남을 통해 제국과 성의 이데올로기들이 외부 현실세계에서 작용하고 있다는 사실을 알게 되었다고 자부한다. 그러나 말로우는 자신의 현실인식 역시 타자를 억압하고 타자의 정체성을 소멸시키는 서구의 전체주의적 이데올로기 담론에 의해 침윤되어있다는 사실을 모르는 주체이다. 말로우는 서구 계몽주의 주체인 동시에 계몽주의의 이분법적 위계서열을 가치판단의 기준으로 삼는 이성에 의해 지배당하는 식민주체이다. 말로우는 자신이 제국주의의 본질이란 정치적 폭력과 경제적 수탈로 점철되는 현실이고 이것을 깨달은 진정한 계몽주체라고 자랑한다. 그러나 그의 서사담론은 제국주의에서 발견되는 배타적이며 자기중심적 이데올로기와 성 이데올로기로 원주민을 비인간적 존재로 판단하고 여성을 이상화된 세계에 매몰된 존재로 파악하는 자기모순의 오류를 범하고 있다.

주제어 : 죠셉 콘래드, 『어둠의 속』, 전체주의, 이데올로기, 주체성

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