CHAPTER – 4

Identity Crisis: The Themes of Evil, the Value of Human Solidarity and Endurance in Joseph Conrad’s Short Novels: *Heart of Darkness* and *Typhoon*
In this chapter, I have selected Conrad’s two short novels *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and *Typhoon* (1902). Both novels are his early novels with similar themes. *Heart of Darkness* is a masterpiece and *Typhoon* is a minor work. The two novels have more autobiographical elements. *Heart of Darkness* is about many things: identity crisis, seafaring, river-boating, trade and exploration, imperialism, colonialism, race relations, the attempt to find meaning in the universe while trying to get at the mysteries of the subconscious mind.

**Heart of Darkness (1902):**

It deals with Conrad’s experience in Congo. It is one of the most important literary works of the early twentieth century. It is a complex novella; it offers a brilliant fictional account of the savage extortion which flourished in the guise of imperial progress. It was completed 1899. It was serialized in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in three volumes from February to April 1899, and it was published in book form in 1902. A famous critic Edward Garnett declared about Conrad’s new work in *Academy and Literature*:

*Heart of Darkness*, to present its theme bluntly, is an impression, taken from life, of the conquest by the European whites of certain portion of Africa, an impression in a particular civilizing method of a certain great European Trading Company face to face with the ‘nigger.’ We say this much because the English reader likes to know where he is going before he takes art seriously, and we add that he will find the human life, black and white, in *Heart of Darkness* commonly and uncannily serious affair. If the ordinary reader, however, insists on taking the subject of a tale very seriously, the artist takes his method of presentation more seriously still, and rightly so. 1
The plot of the novel *Heart of Darkness* is as follows:

Marlow sits on the *Nellie* at the Thames River in the evening with several other people and begins narrating a story about how he entered into the Dark Continent. Marlow, who reveled in exploring the uncharted areas of the world, expresses a desire to go to the center of Africa. Marlow is a captain of a steamboat; he travels to Africa and gets to the Outer Station, where he meets the chief accountant. The man is interesting to Marlow since he has been on the continent for three years, yet he keeps himself clean and well-dressed. Marlow learns from him that there exists Mr. Kurtz, who is a first-class agent and the best ivory trader in the company. Marlow finds the blacks being poorly treated and ordered to do meaningless work by the whites. Eventually a caravan arrives and takes Marlow 200 miles north to the Central Station. The general manager, a man who invokes uneasiness, informs Marlow that his steamer has sunk to the bottom of the river. Marlow decides to devote himself to retrieving the steamer and fixing it up. At the station, Marlow meets the brickmaker, a character who seems intent on pumping Marlow for information about the Company's affairs in Europe. The brickmaker reveals that the painting was done by Mr. Kurtz, currently the chief of the best station. Marlow is able to fix up his ship and continue his journey. Marlow continues down the river on his steamboat with a crew of several whites, about 20 to 30 blacks, and a few cannibals. He continues down the river and becomes surrounded by savages in the fog. Marlow is frightened but the savages do not do anything. The savages attack and Marlow's men fire back. The arrows of the savages have little effect on Marlow's men or his boat and the guns of Marlow's men have little effect on the savages since they fire too high. Only Marlow's helmsman dies. Marlow blows the whistle and mysteriously, all the savages retreat in fear.
Marlow reaches the Inner Station, where he is greeted by the Russian Trader, a man who seems to survive in the heart of the continent by not knowing what's going on around him. Kurtz is very ill and needs to be taken back to England, but he does not want to go. In fact, he is the one who orders the attack on the steamboat so that they cannot take him back to England. Kurtz is worshipped by the natives though he completely exploits them. That night, Kurtz tries to escape Marlow catches him and takes him back to the steamboat to head back to England. While still on the river, Kurtz dies saying, "The horror! The horror!" Marlow visits Kurtz's Intended who is still in mourning a year after Kurtz's death. She still remembers Kurtz as the great man he was before he left and Marlow does not tell her what he had become before he died. He tells her that Kurtz's last words were her name.

The issue of identity crisis is manifest in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad being born in Poland, brought up in France and England traveled widely and got citizenship of England. He presents the dilemma of life. Conrad himself faced the problems of identity crisis. It has been reflected in his protagonists who face the turmoil and hardship of identity problems.

The story is narrated by Charlie Marlow. “Conrad describes himself in the portrayal of Marlow,” an officer in the Merchants Navy who appears in Conrad’s *Lord Jim, Youth* and *Chance*. He is sitting on board, a ship anchored in the lower reaches of the River Thames and he tells a group of friend the story of his journey up the Congo River in Africa, in the employment of Belgian trading company. Marlow is in the company of four people: the Director of the Company as the Captain who resembles a pilot and a lawyer, ‘the best of old fellows’ and one of the others is an accountant. He sits cross legged. Conrad describes him, “He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped the
palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol” (p.01). All these sea-voyagers sit in a vessel called Nellie, a cruising yawl. The ship leaves the Thames River towards Gravesend in the Kent via Deptford. Conrad speaks about the river Thames; it serves great seafarers like Francis Dake and Sir John Franklin. It is said, “The parallel of the Thames and the Congo symbolizes our complex inheritance of civilization and savagery.”

Conrad speaks of the sea as a mysterious place. Marlow is encouraged by his aunt to get a job in the company. He gets his appointment but the company receives the news that one of their captains has been killed in a scuffle with the natives. There is an identity crisis in Marlow. He says “This was my chance, and it made me the more anxious to go” (p.8). He seems like a perpetual wanderer. Marlow says the seaman would suffer badly as they would have no worldly comforts. Only their competence of ‘efficiency’ would save them. He adds that his going there was his boyhood dream. In fact, this was Conrad’s dream too. Such Congo for the author as well as for his hero is; “a place of darkness”. But there is in it one river especially, almighty big river, that we can see on the map resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its hood in the sea, its body at rest carving a far a vast country and its tail lost the depth of the land. Marlow says that his predecessor, a Dane had died in his fighting with a black man over the small issue of two hens.

When Marlow enters the office of his job he meets a white man. He glorifies the company’s success. There two women, one is fat and the other slim. They sit as straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool. When he visits a few places in the Congo he finds the nature fascinating but depressing blacks depress him. Marlow in a French steamer traveling with a Swede: “He was a young man, lean, fair, and morose, with lanky hair and a shuffling gait” (p.15). Marlow describes Africa’s nature as:
A rocky cliff appeared, mounds of turned-up earth by the shore, houses on a hill, others with iron roofs, amongst a waste of excavations, or hanging to the declivity. A continuous noise of the rapids above hovered over this scene of inhabited devastation. A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like arts. A jetty projected into the river. A blinding sunlight drowned all this at times in a sudden recrudescences of glare (p.15).

Marlow finds lots of people and all are suffering in a way or another.

In the novel, there is always a crisis of two identities, Europe is identified with the civilized culture, rational, educated, superior and intelligent but Africa is identified with toil, uncivilized, uneducated, uncultured, dull, irrational, Conrad describes Africa negatively as:

Sand-banks, marshes, forests, savages-precious little to eat fit for civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine here, no going ashore: here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness like a needle in a bundle of hay-cold fog, tempests, disease excise and death-death skulking in the air, in the water in the bush (p.4).

Marlow reaches the company. He finds lots of people. They were working in a barbarous manner maybe compelled by some tyrannical agents. It was a glooming circle of some inferno. There, black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, cleaning the earth, half coming out, half affected within the dim light, in all the altitudes of pain, abandonment and despair. Conrad remarks the blacks are dying slowly. Marlow finds a white man an accountant. The white have their own identity but there is always crisis of two identities. The Marlow says “I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, showy, trousers, a clean
necktie, and varnished boot. No hat, Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under green-lined parasol held in a big white hand” (p.19). He shakes hand with people. He learns that the man is the Company’s chief accountant and he keeps books at the station. He speaks about Mr. Kurtz.

Mr. Kurtz is a charismatic person. He is:

The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and as he was good enough to say himself- his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz (p.59).

Kurtz has a power to corrupt others and himself. Through his eloquence he becomes a savage god, adored by the natives among whom he lives and dies. He is identified with upper class and first class agent. Conrad speaks about identities crisis. Europeans have their own identity crisis. Mr. Kurtz identifies with upper class and first class agent and the accountant has his own identity. Negro and Native Africans have their identity but there is always a crisis. When Marlow meets an accountant he gives detailed information about Mr. Kurtz. He is presently incharge of a trading post, a very important one, in the true ivory country, at the very bottom of their focuses.

Conrad focuses two major identities-civilized identity and savage identity. It is said, “When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages-hate, them to the death” (p.20). The next day Marlow leave with a caravan of sixty men for a two hundred mile tramp. The path is very bad and there are abandoned villages. This is a 20 miles of travel. Marlow and his crew reach an inner station and meet its master. Conrad portrays ideological crisis as common in the world. When Marlow has first interview with the Manager, Marlow says,
My first interview with the manager was curious. He did not ask me to sit down after my twenty-mile walk that morning. He was commonplace in a complexion in feature, in manners, and in voice (p.23).

He is a common trader. He does not originate anything. He inspires neither lover nor fear, nor even respect. He is neither civil nor uncivil. He is quiet. He speaks about Mr. Kurtz. He is the best agent, he had, an exceptional man of the greatest importance to the company.

Conrad always highlights crisis of virtue and evil, when Marlow meets clerk and asks about Mr. Kurtz. The man doest not pay much attention:

Yes, Today he is chief of the best station, next year he will be Assistant Manager, two years more and but I dare say you know what he will be in two years’ time. You are of the new gang, the gang of virtue. The same people who sent him specially also recommended you. Oh, don’t say no. I’ve my own eyes to trust (p.28).

Mr. Kurtz is a “Universal genius.” He is the best agent. Marlow comes across an Elderado Exploring Expedition, which is carrying its loots in the land of loot and lawlessness. Marlow reaches Mr. Kurtz’s station. He is very eager to meet him. He is the hero of Congo’s ivory trade. He meets him and notices cannibalism on the way. His way is full of wild-trees. The mystery of the forest is there. He narrates of his adventures and it is full of suspense and thrill. Conrad through his character Marlow reveals the truth of the world. There is a reference to life’s misery and suffering. There is thick fog. Finally Marlow meets Kurtz and he hears the news of Kurtz’s fall. Kurtz collects ivory in heaps. Kurtz has taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land. Marlow learns that Kurtz is also in charge of same humanitarian aid. The
international society for the suppression of savage customs has entrusted him with the making of a report for its future Congo’s.

Conrad portrays the character of Mr. Kurtz, as it the whites are superior to black. Indirectly he is a raciest. In a lecturer of 1975, the African Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, alleged that ‘Heart of Darkness’ revealed Conrad to be ‘a bloody racist’ It is said:

He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, ‘must necessarily appeared to them (savages) in the nature of supernatural beings—we approach them with the might, as of a deity; and so on, and so on. By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded (p.59).

On the other hand, the whites have their own agenda, the act of exterminating the brutes. So Marlow hears much about Kurtz’s death and the burning of his station and his belongings. Later he meets another white civilized man- a Russian on the way, who is very closely acquainted with Kurtz.

Conrad always focuses on identity crisis. In the novel, he points before the death of Mr. Kurtz. Mr. Kurtz is a selfish fellow; he wants power of darkness. At the edge of death he utters some words:

My Ivory: Oh Yes, I heard him ‘My intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my-everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle (p. 58).
Kurtz is a genius. He discovers several villages, a lake too. His expeditions are mainly for ivory. He lacks restraint in the gratification of his lusts.

Mr. Kurtz takes Marlow into his inner station. He thinks he is immortal. Conrad says, “A voice! a voice! It ranges deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart” (p.83). Marlow feels Kurtz is remarkable a man. He has something to say at the edge. He cries out twice, a cry that is no more than a breath. Kurtz cries: The horror! The horror! (p.86). Mr. Kurtz passes away. Their appears his friends Marlow reflects his past days spent with him. He gives a packet of paper and a photograph to his African mistress.

Marlow returns to Europe. He meets Mr. Kurtz’s beloved. There is a dialogue at the end of the novel relating to his conversation to Kurtz’s beloved in Europe. On hearing Kurtz’s story she bursts forth:

And of all this: she went as mournfully, ‘of all his promise, and of all his greatness, of his generous mind, of his noble heart, nothing remains—but a memory. You and I ……. She said suddenly very low, ‘He died as he lived. “His end: said I with dull anger stirring in me: was in every way worthy of his life. “Repeat them, ‘she murmured in a heart-broken tone. I want-I want something-something-to-live with, the dark was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of rising wind. ‘The horror! The horror!. “His last word-to live with, she insisted. Don’t you understand I loved him- I loved him! I pulled myself together and spoke slowly. “The last word he pronounced was-your name” (p.94).
Marlow during his journey, he observes the racial discrimination being practiced in a society and the civilized deals with the natives of the Africans Congo in a cruel and inhumane ways. Marlow confronts six manacled Negroes who perform their job with death like indifference. He finds the group of emaciated Negroes dying of hunger and starvation. It is a scene of eternal misery. He experiences a sense of guilt in being a partner to the passive agents of heartless exploitation being carried there. It seemed to him that he has entered the gloomy circle of some inferno; an unnatural and absurd world where men have became inhuman.

Marlow takes the Congo journey largely as a boyish whim proved an almost devastating experience for him. It transforms him profoundly. From the beginning we see that Marlow confronts with the existential predicament to chose. His decision to go to the Congo is the first conscious choice, resulting from his desire to travel to the centre of the earth. In the steamboat, Marlow is to take the place of Fresleven, a Dan, who learns later that he has been killed in scuffle with the natives. The reason of his death emphasizes the theme of futility and utter trivialization of human existence.

Marlow’s confrontation with the dark forces begins as he visit the company headquarters to sign a contract. His enthusiasm is tempered by the visit. The city reminds him of a whetted sepulcher. The company officers are situated in a narrow deserted street and overall it looks a dreary forbidding place. In an outer room, Marlow meets two women, one fat, the other slim, both knitting black wool feverishly. It seems to him that they are knitting his fate in black wool. They resemble the shadowy, fates that guard the gate between the world of civilized conventions and the uncivilized world. Marlow sees an unconcerned wisdom in their scrutinizing gaze. The whole atmosphere seems eerie and fateful to Marlow.
The themes of restraint and man’s journey into self run through *Heart of Darkness* and actually become intertwined. It is interesting that Marlow and Kurtz, coming from the same background, do not end up the same in the novel. Kurtz is doomed by his lack of restraint. Marlow comes to the Congo for experience in the ancient belief that a man is shaped by what he does, that character is formed by what happens to one.

*Heart of Darkness* can be seen as a journey. Marlow’s mythical journey in search of self, in order to bring back a new truth, and, through all the pages of the novel, the main character relates his experiences journeying up the Congo River in quest of another white man Kurtz. The enigmatic man is received by the black natives as if he is a god, but perhaps because he has gone into the jungle without knowing himself, another unprepared ordeal. His wrong conduct takes him beyond the limits of his heart, paying the price in madness and death. On the contrary, Marlow does not transgress his limits and comes back without fully understanding his experience, and although the heart of darkness tries to exercise its influence on him, he is able to restrain himself. Marlow is served because his aim is self-acknowledge meat of the mystery of existence.

Kurtz’s native woman appears to Marlow as: “She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent. There was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress” (p.74). She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet. She had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, and crimson spot on her teeny cheek. It is said, “The women in Conrad’s novels are vague for quite a different reason, they are sentimentalized.” For Marlow she embodies the spirit of the dark forests:
And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive as touch it had been looking at the image of its ach tenebrous and passionate soul (p.74).

If we compare this splendid savage with Kurtz’s Europeans lover, it may be seen that we are setting side by side dynamic energy with sterile hypocrisy, life with death. The savage is tragic and fierce; we may take it for granted that Kurtz has enjoyed sexual urges with her in his role as a worshipped god to whom human sacrifice is offered. Her Dionysian passions might seem more attractive in their vitality, than the living tomb the intended has created for herself in Brussels. As often in Conrad, objects associated with human beings take as appropriate characteristics. The intended lives in a house in a street as still decorous as well-kept alley in a cemetery. Her tall marble fireplace has a cold and monumental whiteness and her grand piano gleams like a somber and polished sarcophagus. She has chosen for herself a graveyard, where she can exist in comfort only through a lie; her condition symbolizes that of Western Europe. In contrast, the savage lived out her sexual urges naturally as if she were a wild beast.

Yet there is something detestable, even loathsome, about this primitive creation. The youthful Russian, who is Kurtz’s befriends in the forest, tells Marlow how she wants to kill for taking rags from the storeroom to mend his clothes. The unspeakable rites degrade Kurtz.

Kurtz represents the class of traders who have come to Africa with a sense of mission, equipped with moral ideas of some sort. He represents western ideologies and retains the strength of his faculties to the end. Kurtz hopes to improve the human condition. He wants each station to be like bacon on the road towards better things, a
centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing. He is an idealist who sets out to civilize Africa. Marlow is curious to know how Kurtz’s idealism has fared in Africa. Kurtz has become a voice rather than a man of action. Marlow knows that Kurtz “collected bartered, swindled or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together” (p.56). Marlow uses a flash back to describes and comment on Kurtz’s appearance. Kurtz entered the heart of African with explicit intention of spreading the light of civilization in its dark regions. His dream however ends in a nightmare. A solitary depraved by extreme circumstance Kurtz raves about, “My ivory, oh, yes, I heard him, My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river” (p.58). He thinks himself a lord of all he surveys. Ivory plays an important role in the corruption of Kurtz.

Kurtz suffers a possession by the powers of evil; the wilderness has absorbed him, his veins, flesh, and soul is sealed. He has literally made himself a kind of devil-god and allowed the natives to deify him, once humanistic mastermind of inordinate personal energy and intelligence, whose burning idealism has been lost to festering empathy with the jungle. Now Kurtz has been installed as a kind of ruthless godhead among cannibals. The facts that he has presided at certain midnight dances where unspeakable rites are offered to him suggest that Kurtz has succumbed to lust and he wants his domination over the natives to continue. Marlow emphasizes his own view that man is in solitude. Marlow feels that Kurtz’s disintegration is the result of loneliness.

Most of mankind faces the identity crisis test. Marlow confronts his audience directly again. He fears that they cannot comprehend his state of mind. How can they who live so securely and contentedly with solid pavement under their feet, understand Kurtz and imagine the particular region of first ages a man may wonder into by way
of solitude and of silence, where no warning voice of a neighbor can be heard? His listeners cannot understand that isolation. In the absence of policeman and public opinion, a man must have his own innate strength. That is the only way to resist the power of darkness. Kurtz has failed in this test.

Kurtz is a kind of every man. Kurtz is possibility of evil is universal; the devil is everywhere. Before he dies Kurtz confides in Marlow something of his background. Marlow considers it impossible to forget Kurtz, a man with the power to frighten rudimentary souls into worshipping him as a deity. Marlow missed the helmsman and awfully and regrets his death. The helmsman, though a savage, he has helped Marlow by steering the ship. Marlow recalls once more his face before he dies. Marlow affirms a sense of brotherhood with the savage, but the very next moment he categorically states that the helmsman, like Kurtz lacks restraint. The savages get a sea burial because Marlow decides that if the helmsman was to be eaten, it would be the fishes that would have him, not the cannibals.

Kurtz has worked in the jungle in a ruthless way and the jungle in its turn has exacted a terrible vengeance for his having dared invade it. He is represented as a civilized man driven mad by the temptations of atavism and the lure of wilderness which ultimately destroys him. The passion for power has led him astray. In African continent, Kurtz finds himself faced with evil. The temptation towards evil is to be curbed by the inner strength. Kurtz lived isolated from his fellow creatures and it is isolation that he has to assert his choice. Marvin Mudrick said, “Kurtz’s unspeakable rites and secrets concern human sacrifice and Kurtz’s consuming a portion of the sacrificial victim.” 6 He has become a victim of the passion, the hidden weaknesses, and his unconscious desires. His rhetoric seduces himself and the others he has repudiated. He is an isolated person. His homeless existence in the Congo has turned
him into a fiend. The isolated Kurtz has surrendered to the forces of darkness. His is estranged from the rest of humanity. An abandoned by the society, he finds himself in the predicament of an outcast.

Marlow struggles with Kurtz’s soul to save him. Kurtz’s intelligence is clear but it seems that his soul has gone mad. He has transformed into an egoistic and hollow source of darkness rather than light. He owes no allegiance to anything except these animal allegiances. Marlow sees the ultimate evil; he has the restraint to get on with the job. Marlow is finally able to persuade Kurtz to return to the streamer couch from which he had fled. As they steam downstream the next day, Kurtz’s barbarous and superb native mistress remains as the share. Racing swiftly out of the heart of darkness Marlow feels that Kurtz would soon die.

In philosophizing about life, Marlow spells out the meaninglessness of existence. I think that it is a definition of Conrad’s almost existent pessimism, feeling frustrated with life and human condition. A complete knowledge of truth comes only after death. In the short moment which divides life from death, lays all the difference. In this Marlow’s partial knowledge differs from Kurtz’s supreme view. Through his heroic struggle of attaining self-knowledge, Kurtz has shown to Marlow a mortal standard by which to live.

The word “The horror! The horror!” is very precious. Kurtz exclaims this prior to his last breath of life. In those final moments, Kurtz is able to say something so true about the whole mess of human life. A life is dominated by the fittest, perceived differently through each human eye and full of judgment lacking understanding of all sides. The various ways the world is viewed causes many problems amongst its people. Whether they are about racism, identity crisis, wealth or even common sense, conflicts are still to arouse us. The answer to this is not yet clear because of its
complexity and endless variables. Yet what is clear is that it ties into two other aspects-prejudices and social Darwinism Perception is the seed from which those two aspects grow. The most commonly made mistake throughout the world in past and present is prejudice. Judging without the true understanding of all aspects of a situation has caused entire civilization to collapse. People will do incredible stupid things when they are scared and uneducated about others. During the trip upriver to meet Kurtz, the pilgrims are extremely fearful of the alleged “cannibals” because of their skin tone, appearance and little understanding of them. They are overworked, poorly fed and generally distrusted by the pilgrims.

Mr. Kurtz’s final words as he lay dying are “The horror! The horror! - How to interrupts these words. Is it horror of the one culture decimating another in the name of religion, or civilization or greed? May be Kurtz had at the moment fully understood what he had become or was it a term of victory, enlighten or it was not the recognition of just his wrongs, but the recognition of life’s wrongs, terrors, and disappointments that caused Kurtz to cry out.

Kurtz’s last words “The horror! is nothing but “moral victory.” He had plundered and killed and destroyed, but in the end he realized the cruelty of life and judged it more than can be said about the countless others that die daily in the ‘heart of darkness’. “The heart of darkness” is not Africa. It is not England or Belgium or India, or United State. The heart of darkness is the unexamined heart of man. Through the narration of Marlow, Conrad challenged his readers to examine themselves to gain the “moral victory” before it is too late.

Conrad uses colour very effectively as a tool of symbolism in Heart of Darkness. Colours especially black and white are used in the manner of white (virtue) and black (evil) Other colours are used although less often than black and white.
Throughout the story, people are through to have white souls or black souls depending upon their innate “goodness” or “badness” or the role they are fulfilling at the time. The colour of a person’s soul is often contrasted to the colour of their skin. Jacques Berthoud says, “The blacks are real because they want no excuse for being there; they belong to their environment and their environment belongs to them.”

*Heart of Darkness* reveals many ideas and philosophies regarding human life. How people see each other and connect with each other is one of the larger aspects of human life covered in this tale. During his journey, Marlow meets many different types of people that he is able to decipher from the good and bad personal characteristics. These people all contribute to Marlow’s growth as a person as he breaks down barriers inside himself that deal with race, loyalty, and the way people interrelate with each other. Peter J Glassman says, “*Heart of Darkness* is about the crisis of Conrad’s sea experience and Marlow’s desperate pursuit of the power to feel.”

The first site that Marlow sees on his expedition puts an instant stereotype into his head. The sight is one of skinning, black laborers at the outer station. Marlow notices a young boy who is hungry and feeds him a biscuit. He sees this image of people how they are living consciously or unconsciously. It makes a note in his mind that this is a way Africans are. Marlow meets an accountant at the station, who provides Marlow with his first real distinction between the races. He presents himself in a gracious manner. The white manager on a boat is another character that speaks to Marlow’s intellect by way of his action. Marlow gains some of his most significant self-growth in the story through his encounters and his analyzing of the manager. The meeting of Kurtz is something that is built up for Marlow throughout his entire journey down the Congo. Kurtz is very ill and acting strangely. He has been overcome
by his passion for the ivory trade and had let it take over his life to a point where it was going to kill him.

After his time with Kurtz, Marlow realizes that this whole journey is about ivory or making money; it is about the pursuit of character that makes people in this world better. Marlow uses what he learns on this journey to break down the barriers inside himself and become a better person. Marlow is no longer just a naïve European; he is not as open-minded and loyal human being. It is said:

Marlow is not merely a ‘vehicle’ for the narrative in *Heart of Darkness* let alone spokesmen for Conrad. He is a fully dramatized character and such speaks for himself. As a man of compassion, outrage and insight, he is at once a sympathetic apologist for colonialism and also an exacting critic of it.⁹

Modern English novelists depicts a very general reality; that is, what many observe to be “real” is what found its way into the narratives. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow’s character is remarkably vogue. What is known about him comes directly from the man himself.

The novel speaks of man’s troubles problems, strange encounters, ego-clash, racial differences, ethnic troubles, different types of cultures, man’s inner dread and anguish when he faces life, A critic Cedric Watts observes:

Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is a rich, vivid, layered, paradoxical and problematic novella of long tale; a mixture of oblique autobiography, traveler’s yarn, adventure story, psychological odyssey, political satire, symbolic prose-poem, black comedy spiritual melodrama, and skeptical meditation. It has proved to be ‘ahead of its times’: an exceptionally proleptic text.¹⁰
Typhoon (1903):

It is a minor masterpiece. It is a vivid account of life on board ship during a storm. The plot is unified around the theme of the Captain’s stubborn heroism. It was published in 1903. It was initially serialized in the British magazine *Pall Mall* between January and March 1902 and appeared to have been written between September 1900 and January 1901. In 1919 Conrad added an ‘Author’s Note’ in which he stated that the central incident is based on real life but not on personal experience. He heard it ‘talked about in the East’ but had never met anybody personally concerned in this affair. The protagonist character Mac Whirr is taken from the captain under whom Conrad had several tasks on the *Highland Forest*. The ‘Author’s Note’ makes the important point that the real subject of the story is:

Not the bad weather but the extraordinary complication brought into the ship’s life at a moment of exceptional stress by the human element below her deck. Neither was the story itself ever enlarged upon in my hearing.11

Many contemporary literary journals praised *Typhoon*. The *Daily Mail* praised the *Typhoon*. It says,

*Typhoon* is the most elaborate storm piece that one can recall in English literature. It is nothing but an account of a cargo steamer in the typhoon in the China Sea, with a subordinate study of her master, captain Mac Whirr and of her behavior in new and staggering circumstances. It comes near to deserving a description similar to that which Stevenson applied to one of his own stories: it is a sonata of ships and storms and breaking waves.12
Conrad bundled *Typhoon* with several other short stories as a book. Critical reaction was positive, though most scholars now firmly place *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and *The Secret* far above it. Still, as a rollicking sea yarn, *Typhoon* has few equals and undergirding its narrative drive are deeper themes that raise compelling questions about the nature and usefulness of intelligence and imagination in extreme crisis.

The story of the novel *Typhoon* is as follows:

This is a simple tale of the sea, painted with a clean economy of style and humorous observation of the characters. Although ostensibly about an encounter of the steamer *Nan-Shan* with a typhoon in the South China Seas, it is really about the commander Captain Mac Whirr, who is a hard working Captain devoted to routine and loyal to the needs of the *Non-Shan* and the interests of her owners. Yet his lack of imagination seems obvious to the threat of death or disaster in any situation. He has the ability to deal calmly and phlegmatically with the crisis and to bring the vessel through. Mr. Jukes is a second mate of doubtful nerve. So is the highly competent chief engineer Solomon Rout. Also abroad are 200 Chinese laborers returning home with seven years wages stowed in their campher–wood chests.

As the air thickens, clouds gather, swell build and the barometer begins to fall alarmingly. Jukes urges his Captain to steer around the storm to the latter’s incredulity. Mac Whirr is helpless, the crew and their human cargo plunge into the storm’s fury. Throughout the tempest Mac Whirr keeps the deck, hanging on far dear life in the pitch-black night, as the rain, wind and waves buffet the ship.

As things are going on, a messenger informs the Captain that the Chinese quartered beneath the foredeck are all tangled tighter in a wild fight over their
earnings, which have tumbled out of the smashed camphor-chests. Mac Whirr sends
the horrified Jukes and some seamen to restore order and incredibly to recover all the
coins so that they may be fairly redistributed later.

Despite the reservations and fears of Jukes and crew Mac Whirr’s stolid
presence of mind and unbending conviction to stay the course prove their salvation.
No one dies and the ship comes through. The Chinese workers recollect their wages
without the riot. All are satisfied with Mac Whirr’s handling of the matter. The Nan Shan
reaches the destiny and a happy ending.

Identity crisis is a common aspect in Typhoon. The major as well as minor
characters meet an identity crisis. Captain Mac Whirr is a protagonist of the novel. He
is hardworking fellow but do not have imagination. Jukes is the first mate of the
steamer. Mac Whirr is a Caption of the steamer Nan-Shan. The ship is was on her
way from the southward to the treaty port of Fu-Chau with some cargo in her lower
holds and two hundred Chinese coolies returning to their village homes in the
province of Fo-kien after few years of work in various tropical colonies. It is said
about Mac Whirr:

His hair was fair and extremely fine, clasping from temple to temple the bald
dome on his skull in a clamp as of fluffy silk. The hair of his face, on the
contrary, caroty and flaming, resembled a growth of copper wire clipped
short to the line of the lip; while, no matter how close he shoved, fiery metallic
gleams passed, when he moved his head, over the surface of the cheeks. He
was rather below the medium height, a bit round shouldered, and so sturdy of
limb that has clothes always looked a shade too tight for his arms and legs (p.
197).
Young Jukes is the first chef mate. He is always alert and he is the greatest gentleman. Mr. Solomen Rout, the chief engineer, an experienced seaman, he is always smoking in the morning and takes care of the ship. Captain Mac Whirr, “Having just enough imagination to carry him through each successive day, and more, he was tranquility sure of himself; and from the very same cause he was not in the least conceited” (p.198). Mac Whirr is corresponding letters to his parents about his promotion and of his movements upon the vast earth.

The Nan- Shan is moving in the direction of Formosa Channel about ten O’clock without disturbing the passengers. The Nan-Shan, “with her flat bottom, rolling chocks on bilges and great breadth of beam, had the reputation of an exceptionally steady ship in a sea-way” (p. 199). Conrad portrays China laborers have their own identity; they are full of somber clothing, yellow faces, and pigtails, sprinkled over with a good many naked shoulders. The coolies lounged, talked, smoked; some coolies stared over the rail, some drawing water over the side, a few slept on hatches. Several small parties of six sat on their needed surrounding iron trays with plates of rice and tiny teacups, some ware in gambling, they are busy with their own work.

Mac Whirr loves and adores the ship. It is said, “Old girl was agood as she was pretty” (p.199).The Nan-Shan is very good ship. Messrs Sigg and son are the owners of the ship. Mac Whirr is reading a book at the chart-room; Jukes is always carries his duty sincerely. Mr. Solomon Rout is an engineer. He is tallest man and he has acquired the habit of stooping, leisurely condescension. Two hundred coolies are put down in the Nan-Shan. The Bun Hin Company has sent them to their home, twenty-five bags of rice and the ship moving very smoothly without trouble. Mr. Rout
is a man of imagination. He has enough imagination to keep his desk locked. His wife relishes his style greatly. They are a childless couple and Mrs. Rout a big, high bosomed, jolly woman of forty shares with Mr. Rout’s toothlessness. Everyone is friendly in the ship. There is solidarity in the ship. It is said:

We have no brass-bound uniforms, but there we are like brothers. We all mess together and live like fighting-cocks. All chaps of the black-squad are as decent as they make the kind, and old Sol, the Chief, is a dry stick. We are good friends (p. 205).

*Typhoon* succeeded as a single tale in which Captain Mac Whirr overcomes a typhoon by dint of steadfastness. Here Conrad does not present Mac Whirr as the answer to his question of fundamental good and evil. Mac Whirr and Jukes have a difficult struggle with the element of nature. Ted E. Boyle says, “Captain Mac Whirr the ships officer is the symbol of the understanding of both good and evil which allows man to achieve a spiritual triumph over the dark powers symbolized by the typhoon.”

No doubt, reading such meanings as Mr. Boyle does corresponded to Conrad’s world-view but it seems more of an imposition and less of what the ‘tale’ really says. *Typhoon* is superb in its description which is comparable only to the storm scene in *The Nigger of *Narcissus*.*

Each and every country has a parliament. The ship owners should take permission to launch their ship. The ship owners should answer simple questions on the subject of circular storms such as hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons and apparently during the season of typhoons. The *Nan-Shan* is plagued on a vanishing furrow upon the circle of the sea that has the surface and the shimmer of an undulating piece of gray silk. Chinamen are lying prostrate about the deck, their bloodless, pinched,
yellow faces were like the face of bilious invalids. Captain Mac Whirr notices two of them especially stretched out on their backs below the bridge; as soon as they have closed their eyes. Conrad has pointed out the racial crisis. He writes,

Three others, however, were quarrelling barbarously away forward; and one big fellow, half naked, with herculean shoulders, was hanging limply over a winch; another sitting on the deck, his knees up and his head drooping sideways in a girlish attitude, was plaiting his pigtail with infinite languor depicted in his whole person and in the way moment of his fingers (p.208).

Captain Mac Whirr is an uneducated man, his language is informal. He uses as “What the devil are you doing there” (p.208). This is unused form of address to everyone.

There is a big crisis. Captain Mac Whirr watches the weather. Jukes also wonder about the weather. Mac Whirr is on the side of the bride. He feels, “There is some dirty weather knocking about” (p.209). Mr. Jukes and second engineer watch the weather carefully. The Nan-Shan is known for a brotherly nature everything going very smoothly. The skipper is on the other side of the bride. The barometer is very helpful to move the ship smoothly; the engineer directs Jukes to move. The Chinese coolies talk a lot and disturb workers. Mac Whirr warns them. Every night at eight O’clock Jukes does into the chart-room and write up the ship’s long. Juke was very honest; he did his work without fail. Generally second mate or Captain should write daily dairy. So Jukes copies it neatly out of the rough book. Jukes watches the flying big stars for a moment and writes the details.

There are every possibilities of appearance of a typhoon. The second mate is marched to the bride, tripping down with small steps one moment, and the next
climbing with difficulty the shifting slope of the deck. The second mate makes in his
throat noise. He is an oldish, shabby little fellow, with bad teeth and no hair. But
Jukes does not like unsympathetic served; Jukes reflects rapidly that the second mate
is a mean little beast. There is a clash between Jukes and the second mate:

‘Whatever there might be about,’ said Jukes, ‘we are steaming straight into it.’

‘You’ve said it,’ caught up the second mate, always with his back to Jukes.

‘You’ve said it, mind- not I.’

‘Oh, go to Jericho!’ said Jukes frankly; and the other emitted a triumphant
little chuckle.

‘You’ve said it,’ he repeated.

‘And what of that?’

‘I’ve known some real good men get into trouble with their skippers for saying
a dam sight less,’ answered the second mate feverishly. ‘Oh no! You don’t
catch me’ (p. 214).

Captain Mac Whirr is always reading a book. He is not lying down; he is
standing up with one hand grasping the edge of the bookshelf and the other holding
open before his face a thick volume. When the ship is in trouble he is reading books.
Conrad points out that when the ship is in trouble Jukes would like to inform about
the ship. He asked:

‘What’s the matter? Swell getting worse, sir.’

Noticed that in here, muttered Captain Mac Whirr.
‘Anything wrong? Jukes, inwardly disconcerted by the seriousness of the eyes looking at him over the top of the book, produced an embarrassed grin.

‘Rolling like old boots,’ he said sheepishly. ‘Aye! Very heavy – very heavy. What do you want? At this Jukes lost his footing and began to flounder.

‘I was thinking of our passengers’, he said, in the manner of a man clutching at a straw,

‘Passengers?’ wondered the Captain gravely.

‘What passengers?’ (p.214).

When Jukes explains about the trouble he replies negatively. When China men come to speak with him he closes the book completely mystified.

Mac Whirr is a man of serious studies. When he hears the message about storm he speaks with the utmost simplicity of manner and tone. He fixes the oilcloth on the floor with a heavy stare and he notices Jukes and begins to read. He searches his book. “Now, here is this book”, he continues with deliberation, slapping his thigh with the closed volume. ‘I’ve been reading the chapter on the storms’ (p. 115). He has been reading a chapter on the storm, when he enters the chart-room. It is with no intention of taking the book down but he takes a book and reads about storm. He loses himself and forgets everything. Jukes opens his arms in the door way. He is like a man invited to behold a miracle, undoubtedly a miracle, intellectual meaning of his eye, while incredulity is seated in his whole countenance. ‘A gale is a gale,’ Mr. Jukes resumes the Captain and a full powered steam-ship has got to face it. Really Captain
was in identity crisis. He should escape from bad weather. Captain is busy but
luckily nothing happens. Mac Whirr says “keep her at it as long as we can” (p. 219).

Juke is a different character. Juke is uncritically glad to have his Captain at
hand. He relieves him from the tension and he alone comes on deck and takes most of
the gale’s weight upon his shoulders. It is privilege and the burden of commander.
Captain can accept no relief of the sort from anyone on earth. He is lonely to
command. He is trying to see with the watchful manner of a seaman who states into
the wind eye as if into the eye of an adversary to penetrate the hidden intention and
guesses the aim of the force. The strong wind sweeps on him, he feels under his feet
the uneasiness of his ship and he cannot even discern the shadow of her shape. He
wishes it was not so he waited, he is so silent, he is totally in crisis.

The steamer Nan-Shan is in danger. It seems too exploding all round the ship
with an overpowering concussion and rush of great waters as if an immense dam had
blow up windward. In an instant, the men lose touch of each other. It is the
disintegrating power of a great wind: it isolates one from one’s kind. An earthquake, a
landslip, an avalanche, overtakes a man incidentally as it were without passion. A
furious gale attacks Mac Whirr. There is a savior effect of wind, the rain pours on
him, flows, draws in sheets. Mac Whirr is in crisis. He breathes in gasps. Sometimes
the water is swallowed. He is actually looked at it when its ray falls upon the
unhearing sea which put it out. He notices the head of the wave topple over; his first
irresistible notion is that the whole China Sea has climbed on the bridge. All the time,
he is being tossed, flung and rolled in great volumes of water. He repeats, the words
“My God! My God’ My God” (p. 221).
The *Nan-Shan* is looted by the storm with a senseless, distractive fury: trysails torn out of the extra gaskets, the bridge swept clean, weather – cloth burst rails twisted, light – screens smashed and two boats had gone already, they had gone unheard and unseen. Jukes cried in an agitated tone “Our boats are going now, sir” (p. 223). But he does not know that they are all on the bridge when the real force of the hurricane strikes the ship. Captain Mac Whirr is very silent, gradually the sea is very calm and it seems to rush from all sides to keep her back where she might perish. Juke puts strength to Captain when he is in tension. Captain Mac Whirr remains his arm from Juke’s shoulders and thereby ceases to exist for his mate, so dark it is; Juke after a tense stiffen of every muscle, let himself go limp all over. The wind gets hold of his head and tries to shake it off his shoulders; his clothes, full of water, are as heavy as lead and dripped. His mind becomes concentrated upon in an aimless, idle way. He does not move.

Joseph Conrad wrote about Captain Mac Whirr in Author’s Note, “Mac Whirr is not an acquaintance of few hours, or few weeks, or a few months. He is the product of twenty years of life. My own life” (p.131). Conrad portrays crisis of Captain Mac Whirr and the ship *Nan-Shan*. There is an effect of hurricane. Juke has no wide experience of men or storms but he conceives himself to be clam, inexorably clam. Jukes is in a psychological identity crisis. He has all sorts of memories although unconnected with his present situation. He remembers his father who was a worthy businessman. Juke does not recall those circumstances. Captain Mac Whirr cries “Jukes, Jukes” but he is in his mood. He answers in the customary manners, ‘Yes sir’. Captain Mac Whirr and his mates fix firm in the crook of his elbow and press it to his yelling lips mysteriously. The hurricane directly full forces the ship; every part of the ship deck becomes untenable. The sailors daze dismay and take shelter in the part
alley. Finally the ship is saved but there is no harm to coolies. The Nan-Shan is very strong ship; it has an iron door. The ship is in danger. Conrad has observed carefully and keenly that coolies are totally neglected in the ship. There is an identity crisis for the coolies.

Mr. Rout is an engineer hand a hard working fellow. He has gone over a board and investigated properly and informed about the typhoon. Mac Whirr, Jukes and Mr. Rout gather and discusses about typhoon. The second engineer, the donkeyman and every officer hard work to safe guard the ship. The China men rise up and save their property. Captain Mac Whirr alone on deck has caught sight of a white line of foam coming on at such a height that he could not believe his eyes. The Nan-Shan is in danger. She lifts her bows and leaps, the flames in all the lamps sink, engine room is dark and everyone is confusion. They are not clear as to what would have to be done. What is it? What is it? They are asking each other. Conrad writes:

Juke pushed through them brutally. He said nothing, and simply darted in.

Another lot of coolies on the ladder, struggling suicidally to break through the battened hatch to a swamped deck, fell off and he disappeared under them like a man overtaken by a landslide (p.243).

Everyone is afraid; the central struggling man of Chinamen goes over to the roll, indistinct, helpless, with a wild gleam of many eyes in the dim light of the lamps.

The typhoon is a terror. It came to kill them. The situation is very crucial. Everyone is in crisis. Every individual is torn out of the rack. Here and there coolies fall on their knees as if begging for mercy; some coolies are sobbed for their breath. Jukes coming out of the alleyway round himself up to the neck in the noisy water, gains the bridge. He perceives dimly the squat shape of his captain holding on to
twisted bridge-rail, motionless and swaying as if rooted to the planks. Conrad portrays Jukes.

Captain Mac Whirr is in crisis. He does not confide to save the ship. He says, “I should not like to lose her” (p.249). He sits unseen apart from the sea from his ship. He is talking himself and he is unconscious. Conrad focuses that practical knowledge is more important than book knowledge. Conrad says that Mac Whirr is not intelligent.

The second mate’s in there too, holding his head.

Is he hurt, sir?

‘No,-Crazy’, said Captain Mac Whirr, curtly ‘

Looks as if he had a tremble, tough’ ‘I had to give him a push,’ explained the Captain, Jukes gave an impatient sigh.

‘It will come very sudden, said captain Mac Whirr and from over there, I fancy, God only knows, though.

These books are only good to muddle your head and make you jump. It will be bad, and there’s an end. If we only can steam her round in time to meet it (p.249).

The sustained climax of the story conveys Mac Whirr’s steady occupancy of his position in space (on deck) and in time (story period). Conrad’s awareness of a sacrifice Mac Whirr must have made and continued to make for thin choice of unreflecting fidelity to duly accounts for the seemingly irrelevant presence in the tale of Mac Whirr’s wife and children. He was always away from them, always a silly,
mindless individual to them. Mac Whirr’s unthinking modesty knows only that he has been through some kind of experience; his letters to them are received with petulant patience. Yet Mac Whirr has no past and to live up to everything is in the present for him. And this is what the tale advances and rejects almost at the same time. To occupy the present with a single minded attention to immediate duty is the achievement of a man for who thought and broader awareness is impossible.

Mac Whirr is a noidealistically rendered individual of comparatively shallow gift a man temperamentally alien to Conrad himself. The dissatisfaction the reader feels at the callous treatment accorded to Mac Whirr by his family, especially after his unacknowledged heroism is interfiled to the point of impatient annoyance with Mac Whirr and not or might be hoped with his family. Mac Whirr remains absolutely steady on course. There are a finite number of things to be done and he does them: to Jukes and the other sailors go the tasks of executing his orders with agony and difficulty.

The importance of Typhoon story is that Conrad’s concept on of Mac Whirr’s successful coping with present disaster can be rendered only in terms of a central action that bears nothing but passivity. Offering the storm merely the resistance necessary for bare survival, Mac Whirr ignores the storms. The storm is a simple storm to Mac Whirr not the darkness, the genius of the tale is that Mac Whirr is both attractively human and nonhuman, active and passive.

Captain Mac Whirr represents the essence of British solidity. It is hardly necessary to talk, according to him:

There were matters of duty, of course- directions, orders, and so on. But the past being to his mind done with, and the future not there yet, the more general
actualities of the day required on comment – because facts can speak for themselves with overwhelming precision (p.201).

The pro-British bias is detected in Conrad’s presentation of the various attitudes by Whites toward Orientals. Mac Whirr may adopt the British’s aloof consideration toward low-class Easterners as when Jukes refers to the laborers in the hold as passengers “The Chinamen! Why don’t speak plainly? Couldn’t tell what you meant. Never heard a lot of collies spoken of as passengers before passengers indeed! What’s come to you?” (p.214). But he also displays the British sense of responsibility for justice. As soon as he learns that the Chinamen and their boxes have broken loose, he sends Jukes down to do what he can for them. Jukes reports that he has rigged life lines and secured the money, adding pessimistically since he firmly believed the ship will be torn apart by the typhoon that:

‘Are you thinking of the coolies, sir?

‘I rigged lifelines all ways across that twenty-deck ‘Did you? ‘Good Idea Mr. Jukes.’ I didn’t….. think you cored to….

‘Know,’ said Jukes – the lurching of the ship cut his speeds as though somebody had been jerking him around while he talked.

‘Now I got on with…. that infernal job.

‘We did it. And it may not matter in the end.

Through the lashing mind, Mac Whirr rebukes him. “Had to do what’s fair, for all – they only Chinaman Give them the same chance with ourselves – hang it all (pp. 249-50).
Two identities are in crisis. The ship officers and laborers are in crisis. When the typhoon has passed an equitable solution for the division of the Chainmen’s money has to be arranged. The ship is in tatter and great amounts of work must be done. No one has been able to sleep for days. Jukes says to Captain Mac Whirr, “I wish” you would let us throw the whole lot of these dollars down to them and leave them to fight it out amongst themselves, while we get rest”. Mac Whirr’s heavy sense of duty, prompts him to reply, “Now you talk wild, Jukes we must plan out something that would be fair to all parties” (p.257). In his sure and steady solidity, he then does just that.

Juke’s attitude in all his youth and excitability, “was gruff, but not unfriendly” (p. 202). In contrast to Jukes, the not very admirable crew of the Nan-Shan represents the gross approach of the insensible element of the European peoples, those who are not “One of us”. Their concern was all for their own petty desire for a light when Jukes is involved with doing what he could for the “inextricable confusion of heads and shoulders, naked soles kicking upwards, firsts raised, tumbling backs, legs, pigtails, faces” on his passage back the hands in the alleyway swore at him for a fool. Why didn’t he bring that lamp? What the devil did the coolies matter to anybody?” (p.210). This attitude rejected by Conrad, is not limited to only the lower classes of British; yet when found in the upper class groups it exists among those who do not really know the East or who are incapable of any real sympathy for that part of the world or understanding of what this sympathy involved.

The essential contrast is between the sensitive, imaginative, thoughtful, vulnerable mate Jukes and the stolid unimaginative Captain Mac Whirr, who can’t see what people find to talk about. The typical Conradian protagonist of the early work is
haunted by the past and either longs for or dreads the future. Therefore he betrays the present. But for Mac Whirr the past is “done with, and the future not there yet”. He is the unconscious servant and product of a certain training and tradition, and builds his ethic on fairness or justice not sentiment.

The two men and two ethics are different identities come into full contrast in response to the plight of the coolies. In the first hours of the rising storm, Jukes proposes changing the course of the ship to reduce its roll, and so that the Chinese can ride more comfortably. But, later, in an hour or real danger, he would have been willing to let them fight for the dollars. This critique of a sentimental ethic is not entirely convincing however, since Jukes as merely ‘clutching at a straw, when he proposes that change of course He has come to captain Mac whirr to express his anxiety, and hoping to be reassured; the coolies are an afterthought. Thus Jukes seems less a typical sentimentalist than a man of good intentions who is also a “warrior” and meets trouble half-way. He is simply a poor officer; a man who if finally he does his duty, at once wants to be praised. The characterization of captain Man Whirr moves with assurance from its first note of faint contempt and first glance at his “ordinary, irresponsive, and unruffled” force to its final heroic image of the exhausted and perspiring man in his shirt-sleeves, paying out the dollars to the Chinese. J.H. Stape observes:

In the coda, the storyteller’s moral authority dissolves and we see the various failures of Mac Whirr, Jukes and Rout to communicate in witting what they have learned. In the central action of the story, however, Mac Whirr’s simple practicality and humane instincts take on mythic significance.
Joseph’s Conrad in the *Typhoon* develops a magnificent picture of man but not a magnificent man except when he fights the typhoon but it is saved. Mac Whirr has a portrait as captain and no one is any the wise for the splendid things they do in the darkness.
Works Cited


(All subsequent quotations with page numbers in brackets are from this edition)


