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Sublimely Gifted but Destined to Fall: A Comparative Study of Conrad's Kurtz and Milton's Satan as the Archetype of Evil Genius

He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land
"Heart of Darkness" YS, 116

Their dread Commander; he, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tower
Paradise Lost I. 589 – 591

The publication of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* has effectively reopened the partly forsaken 'box' with archetypes so as to trigger novel philosophical, religious and literary reflection upon their indispensable value in constructing the narrative framework. Its major value has also been generally perceived as taking apart the deck of traditionally placed emphases on those narrative phenomena and, after their extensive reordering, as stimulating an increase of crops in a field that has already proved so fertile in the past but has, unfortunately, become slightly abandoned. It facilitates the comprehension of archetypes as "the basic and supposedly universal preoccupations of humanity which are thought to inhere in the very structure of the soul, and of which the varieties of cultures with their different mythologies, imageries and concepts, are typical expressions" (Werblowsky, xiii); the literary figures acting not only as intermittent symbols, motifs or myths in literature, mythology or culture, but also as bare structures, unfilled patterns or theoretical possibilities, without any content, indicating the chance of loading the given outline with an imaginable, substantial and nameable content of some specified action, thought or perception.

Satan as an archetype of evil genius has succeeded in attracting unprecedented attention.ⁱ The occurrence confirming the hypothesis that the reality of evil, assuming such shapes as a powerful, albeit furtive force, irresistible influence and deceptive feeling of freedom from any established rules and very often temptation proves to be more captivating and stimulating than its binary opposite, the concept of good denoting straightforwardness, sincerity or humbleness. Besides, transporting our attention to the literary ground and accentuating the narrative process of writing, “it is easier to draw a bad character than a good one” (Gardner, 99). Thus, this embodiment of evil has become to such an extent ubiquitous, reshaped and rethought that one can justly assert that it is very deeply embedded as a literary archetype and has displayed the potential to inspire both those who create and those who read.

This paper aims to analyse some intertextual relationships of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness”, particularly in regard to the appearance in both these works of the archetype of evil genius. It will maintain that Kurtz can easily find his way in the “pandemonium” of iniquity along with Satan. I will explore both similarities and differences between these ‘emissaries of light’ as they converge and separate. Furthermore, I will expand on the observation of Mark Daniel Chilton, that to “claim allusions to *Paradise Lost* is perhaps to do no more than identify Conrad’s novel as a work of modern Western literature” (239). I want to examine the intertextual and meta-linguistic implications of this idea in order to propose the hypothesis that Kurtz, figuratively, embodies a certain ‘primordial’ model – as a Jungian archetype – which is Milton’s Satan. In truth, Conrad’s commanding colonizer’s traits are, in a sense, pulsating in Satan’s, who acts here as an impeccable exemplar of iniquity, the evil genius.

By means of Marlow’s narration, Conrad depicts Kurtz as a mysterious, ambiguous and powerful character. No one can determine conclusively his personality, actions, dreams and ambitions. Nevertheless, Conrad’s narrative repeatedly stresses one particular attribute, namely his affinity with Satan, justly called the “Arch-Fiend” (I. 156).ⁱⁱ

At the onset of the novella, the manager’s eulogy of the mysterious agent – “Mr. Kurtz was the best agent [...] an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company” (YS, 75) – indicates one of many similarities between two icons of iniquity. As Marlow proceeds with his rescue missionⁱⁱⁱ he is constantly faced with a thought-provoking phenomenon. Wherever he happens to be, he persistently hears people talking about the mysterious figure, Mr. Kurtz. Initially, Marlow hears of Kurtz on the shore before his journey upriver. As the narration unfolds, the opportunities to be acquainted with this “gifted creature” (113), “a prodigy” (79) and “a special being” (79) occur often.^{iv} In a similar manner, *Paradise Lost*

portrays Satan as the most important topic for discussions, carried on in the mythological universe. During his perilous journey towards Earth, Satan is waylaid by the eldest of all created things, Night, which discloses the bitter truth about the Fiend's moral condition. Night asserts:

'I know thee, stranger, who thou art –
That mighty leading Angel, who of late
Made head against Heaven's King, though overthrown.
I saw and heard, for such a numerous host
Fled not in silence through the frightened deep,

II. 990 – 94

Satan is presented as one known and generally talked about. Before reaching the physically deteriorating body of Kurtz, Marlow is informed both of the natives' idol and his powerful and atrocious deeds. He eavesdrops on a clandestine conversation about Kurtz, during which he hears the words: "Look at the influence that man must have. Is it not frightful? [...] Then silence. They had been talking about Kurtz" (YS, 89 – 90). Unintentionally, he becomes enlightened regarding this universal genius, especially about the power and influence, both psychological and physical, which he exerts upon others. Marlow is so encircled by shattered pieces of acclamation of Kurtz that his initial lack of concern is eventually transformed into high esteem.

God's Empyrean is also brimming with the talk of a significant personage. In Book III, there is such a conversation:

Only-begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our Adversary? whom no bounds
Prescribed, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
Heaped on him there, nor yet the main abyss
[...] can hold, so bent he seems
On desperate revenge that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head.

III. 80 – 86

The words uttered by the Father designate Satan's pride and assumed heroism that force him towards such a daring action. But although Satan proves to be the cornerstone of a plethora of conversations occurring in the Empyrean, Hell, Chaos and Paradise, a majority of these are

saturated in abhorrence, repugnance and rejection. In fact, only other demons adore him as their Lord; the weird emotion enabling them to perceive vile Satan as their Redeemer who, as the only one, could possibly eradicate fear of ultimate demise and isolation. Unsurprisingly, the interest in “Hell’s dread Emperor” (II. 510) arouses from the same motives as the allurements in Kurtz.

Furthermore, both of them are invariably portrayed as intrepid, dominant and intimidating characters, convinced of their indispensable mission of ‘emissaries of light’ and ‘lower sorts of apostles’ to those who are depraved. Satan is a character endowed with leadership, boldness, and steadfastness. He is depicted as the ancient hero who has just rebelled against an alleged tyrant and is, indirectly, compared to Prometheus who “had stole Jove’s authentic fire” (IV. 719). Correspondingly, Kurtz, who is “always associated with darkness, surrounded by impenetrable mystery and shadows of the night in their literal and symbolic meanings” (Poniatowska, 303) is constantly connected to images of power, authority and menacing influence;^v he seems to possess the power to charm or frighten people. It is impossible not to perceive Fiend as endowed with superb attributes such as power, fearlessness, cleverness and resolve. He has a multitude of excellent qualities which readers mostly admire and respect. Satan is the one who “with ambitious aim / Against the throne and monarchy of God / Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud, / With vain attempt” (I. 41 – 4); he is the “Chief of many throned Powers / That led the embattled Seraphim to war” (128 – 9). He adamantly refuses to accept the dictatorship of God and openly protests against Heaven’s Monarch. According to Raleigh:

Satan unavoidably reminds us of Prometheus, and although there are essential differences, we are not made to feel them essential. His very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool. The nobility and greatness of his bearing are brought home to us in some half-dozen of the finest poetic passages in the world.

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Satan is “the first Archangel, great in power, / In favour, and pre-eminence” (V. 660 – 1) but he is also ironically called by Gabriel “sly hypocrite” (IV. 957) and “Patron of liberty” (958).

Kurtz, while leaving for Africa, expected to bring civilization to savages; instead he has regrettably become reduced to a gloomy emblem of awe-inspiring evil. His power grows along with his swift actions devoted to stealing ivory. Others refer to him as “a species of wandering trader – a pestilential fellow, snapping ivory from the natives” (YS, 91). In his

expeditions Kurtz is a supercilious trader searching for ivory and, contingently, for fame and reputation to satisfy his appetite for being idolized.^{vi} Marlow is informed that “as a rule Kurtz wandered alone, far in the depths of the forest. [...] he had discovered lots of villages, a lake, too [...] ‘To speak plainly, he raided the country,’” (127 – 128). This recalls the atrocities of Satan, who “with thoughts inflamed of highest design / [...] toward the gates of Hell / Explores his solitary flight” (II. 630 – 2) so as to open a path for Death and Sin and make it possible for them to enter the newly created world. Satan’s tendency towards application of crime is fervidly revealed by Abdiel, the faithful angel that does not succumb to his temptation. The harsh, yet genuine defamation is worth being cited wholly:

O alienate from God, O Spirit accursed,
 Forsaken of all good! I see thy fall
 Determined, and thy hapless crew involved
 In this perfidious fraud, contagion spread
 Both of thy crime and punishment; henceforth
 No more be troubled how to quit the yoke
 Of God’s Messiah [...]
 [...]
 That golden sceptre which thou didst reject
 Is now an iron rod to bruise and break
 Thy disobedience

V. 877 – 883, 886 – 888

Both Satan and Kurtz are eloquent, persuasive speakers and leaders, availing themselves so easily of evil. For Marlow, Kurtz is a great man because he has something to say and he is not afraid to say it. His article imbued with lofty ideals about the imperial mission, being dexterously composed in Europe, concludes with a genuine expression, added in the African interior after having undergone moral corrosion. The words – “Exterminate all the brutes!” (YS, 118) – excruciatingly testify to his ethical deterioration, which has become his fate in Africa. Indeed, Kurtz is at that moment at the highest pitch of his sincerity. These words disclose his straightforwardness both in action and thought and confirm that he is in a certain aspect different from Milton’s creation, who proves to be deceptive, sometimes humble, taking a variety of shapes and attitudes. He effortlessly assumes the form of the bogus dissembler and practices the way of “[H]ypocrisy, the only evil that walks / Invisible” (III. 683 – 4).

Watt asserts that “Kurtz is a poet, a painter, radical politician, a man endowed with the power of eloquence” (189). Undoubtedly, the eulogy is accurate since in “Heart of Darkness” one can perceive that Kurtz’s career, fame, reputation and his position as the natives’ idol is secured by his aptitude for speech. While being bombarded with people’s remarkable judgments about Kurtz, Marlow claims that he envisioned him rather as discoursing, not acting. Among all Kurtz’s many abilities, powerful oratory is the most prominent. Marlow claims:

The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk; his words – the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.

YS, 113 – 114

Does this encomium not draw our attention to Satan, as a literary figure endowed with superb eloquence, who is at absolute ease while reviving other fallen angels?

Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering – but out of this be sure:
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
[...]
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil

I. 157 – 60, 164 – 5

The overall style of Satan’s speech directed to his fallen angels during the infernal debate in Pandemonium reveals one of his most prominent attributes.^{vii} He is a natural leader and, what is more, a very powerful rhetorician. According to Bednarek, “Milton’s prince of demons is a great individualist” (307); an intrepidly silver-tongued one. Satan speaks as if he were a military commander – “the 17th century thought of angels as male and military” (62), declares Broadbent. Similarly, Marlow feels unable to portray Kurtz in any other way. For him, indisputably, the agent is endowed with a tremendous ability to express himself, and his words disclose “the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an

impenetrable darkness” (YS, 113 – 114). In fact, many a time Kurtz, who “becomes a disembodied voice uttering words whose meaning is unfathomable” (Marx, 376) is conceptualized as a discoursing rather than an acting figure, yet his deeds are really remarkable. This capability inevitably unveils the next point of affinity and difference between him and Satan, namely the force, assuming many a shape, which pushes them towards collapse.

As the narrative of the epic proceeds, the Emperor of Hell is conceptualized as one ultimately destroyed both by wounded ambition and adamant pride mixed with unfaltering hatred and futile desire for ineffective revenge on God. This hellish attribute is revealed in everything he accomplishes and utters. He is completely susceptible to the pressure of pride. Kurtz is also the depraved character who lets his uncontrollable impulses go rampant to the point of no return. Thus although Satan and Kurtz do fall victims to their passion of gaining, pilfering and winning, they differ considerably as to their object of attention. Kurtz has raided the country in order to obtain as much ivory as feasible. By doing so has reached the bottom of his existence, whereas Milton’s Satan wishes to achieve revenge on the Omnipotent. What is more, “Kurtz has indulged in unhealthy emotions to gorge his falsely nurtured ego. Since all he does is without any conflict of conscience, he becomes evil incarnate” (Mathew, 318), in the similar way to Satan who swears to himself, “Evil, be thou my Good” (IV. 110).

Avarice is, indeed, a very powerful force. According to Werblowsky:

Hubris can be defined as the personification of overweening pride in which man, heedless of mortal nature and losing all sense of measure, allows his skill, his power and his good fortune to make him arrogant towards gods and men, thus bringing down upon himself the avenging punishment of the gods, *Nemesis*.

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The above definition of hubris completely defines both Milton’s Satan and Conrad’s Kurtz, whose chief objective is to pilfer as much ivory as possible, regardless of the moral cost. Krajka holds that calling this unrivaled colonizer “‘an animated image of death carved out of old ivory’ [...] with a head like a ball of the same [...] suggests that greed is the essence of Kurtz’s character” (223). Fallen Archangel is completely susceptible to and contingent on the prevailing influence of conceit and avarice, forcing him to transform his “intellectual pride into ‘dread of shame’ and hatred of God into personal envy, [...] into the expression of spite” (Stein, 84).

Greed is one of the most powerful Kurtz's lusts – avarice for this precious product found in the infernal jungle, ivory. “Kurtz's motives for being in Africa are linked to his function as an agent, and [...] an enigmatic character” (190), comments Lothe. His urge blinds and enchants him completely due to his unrestrained behaviour in the realm where the only desired reaction was a craving for getting a trading-post enabling one to obtain ivory. Thus, being entirely engrossed in such a lucrative environment, Kurtz is incapable of resisting temptation. Marlow surmises that:

The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball – an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and – lo! – he had withered; it had taken him, loved him embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite. Ivory? I should think so. Heaps of it, stacks of it.

YS, 115

Consequently, greed and a propensity to the dark side of the jungle triggered his degradation and inevitable fall. Satan, on the other hand, seems to be entirely engaged in spiritual rather than worldly matters, viz., the study of revenge and immortal hatred. His whole being is committed to despise his Creator. What is more, as evil incarnate, Satan is portrayed as one who can willingly dispose of all his riches, being in fact the ruler of the world. Kurtz participates in native rites tearing the nights with “the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild – and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country” (71). Milton's Prince of Hell, on the other hand, seems to be conceptualized as one who is above any ritual taking place in Hell but one, *rite de passage*; the ritual during which one is invited to change his status by acquiring initiation. Kurtz's commitment towards savage rituals escalates along with his immersion in the darkness of the jungle most apparent when Kurtz's adorers pay homage to their deity.

Kurtz's fall is presented as the result of his hatred, his megalomaniacal scheming, his inward pride and insatiable desire. Likewise, Satan's deterioration is the result of his wounded hubris. Fish claims that “Satan's powerlessness is revealed many times in *Paradise Lost*” (79). The prince of Hell and his disciples are depicted as “blotted out and rased / By their rebellion from the Books of Life” (I. 362 – 3) and they are outcast from God. One of the most moving manifestations of Satan's gradual degradation is revealed in his soliloquy as he looks towards the sun, which bitterly wakes the memory of what he has lost due to his infernal

revolt. Grossman notes that “the sun, which Satan recognizes as a divine surrogate arouses his memory of heaven and forces him for the first time in the epic to admit his essential (and therefore irreducible) difference from God” (72). Thus although “Satan is the archetype of all malign political subversion” (Stocker, 35), he is in fact totally defeated by his extreme vanity, which has mercilessly driven him to initiate rebellion against the Omnipotent, that can never be defeated.

Correspondingly, while being severed from his adored dwelling, Kurtz hears yells and roars of longing from the indigenous people, who only reluctantly relinquish their supreme ruler. Marlow claims that they utter “strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language; and the deep murmurs of the crowd, interrupted suddenly, were like the responses of some satanic litany” (YS, 146). Natives bid farewell to their master and idol who, astonishingly, is shown not as a dynamic superhuman endowed with remarkable skills and gifts, but as a weak man, crushed in a manner similar to Satan, prostrate on the lake of fire, “vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf” (I. 52). Undoubtedly, various passions mingle in Kurtz’s soul. He experiences pensiveness and detestation. Despite his infirmity, one of his greatest gifts remains, his magnificent and profound voice, sounding deep to the very last breath. Similarly, after his being “Hurlled headlong flaming from the ethereal city” (I. 45), Satan is heard as much as is seen, summoning and mastering, as their legitimate sovereign, his disconsolate crew of fallen angels.

Although Kurtz’s “The horror! The horror!” (YS, 149) is akin to Satan’s “Hail, horrors!, hail” (I. 250), one cannot avoid observing that these characters differ considerably at that heart-stopping moment. Death comes as a welcomed guest to Kurtz as the late-arriving perception of his moral condition, whereas Satan does not wish to repent and suffer punishment, believing to the very last moment that for such repulsive iniquity there is no atonement.

In both “Heart of Darkness” and Milton’s epic, the dominant figures are incapable of escaping “one’s state of mind”, whether in Hell or in Heaven. “Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell” (IV. 75), shouts furious Satan while experiencing the delightful, yet tormenting vision of Eden and his own miserable seclusion. He acknowledges that wherever he betakes himself and whatever he does, the sense of Hell within is always with him. In the similar fashion, Marlow observes Kurtz’s behaviour at the point of demise. He asserts that Kurtz “kept on looking out past me fiery, longing eyes, with the mingled expression of wistfulness and hate” (YS, 146). It is impossible not to discern that those longing eyes betray that genius, whose soul is thought to have been mad. He definitely experiences the

impossibility of leaving the darkness of the spellbinding jungle. Wherever he may roam, the powers of a hellish jungle will always attend this degraded soul.

Upon leaving the physical Hell, Satan does not realize that in deceiving himself about his actual situation he unintentionally fulfills God's judgment. The perception, impetuously, dawns on him when he reaches Paradise. The narrator asserts that:

The Hell within him, for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step, no more than from himself, can fly
By change of place

IV. 20 – 23

Satan seems to realize for the first time that the hell he knows is ultimately a desperate state of mind. As Błaszczewicz has appropriately put it, "it is, nevertheless, important to see that his version of 'Hell – the state of mind' springs not just from a psychological progress, but from the presence of the actual physical Hell in the poem" (27). Now, he is traumatically haunted both by the memories of what was his before the revolt and hatred of his damned condition. Conrad depicts the last moments of Kurtz's existence, to the same effect:

Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched, I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror – of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath – The horror! The horror!

YS, 149

Kurtz seems to cry at the vision of his beloved jungle-Hell from which he is severed. Thus, his physical death can be identified as the suffocation of his spiritual self devoted entirely to a hellish jungle and its powers.

Kurtz does not struggle against God, as Satan does with all his infernal persistence and foolhardiness, but against himself and his soul, which is entirely enmeshed in darkness. This dramatizes "the struggle between incompatible epistemologies, different knowledges" (Parry, 36). Marlow, while shockingly issuing the statement: "how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own" (YS, 116), reveals that his struggle with Kurtz has made him perceive

Kurtz as sheer energy without restraint or fear. Whereas Milton's Satan – although he discloses tendencies towards hesitation in his evil mission which could in some moments indicate an inner struggle – does rebel chiefly against the Almighty so as to voice his disagreement with God's rules.

Kurtz's internal conflict emerges and escalates the moment Kurtz is faced with either leaving willingly an infernal jungle in which he has become paramount, or being taken away by force. Kurtz's Russian admirer, after having looked briefly into Kurtz's intricate soul, avows that his idol "hated sometimes the idea of being taken away" (139) from the jungle but also from his psychologically captive natives who deplore his departure. He does not willingly leave jungle but is subliminally unable to do so. While Kurtz seems inseparable from his adored dwelling, Satan is bent upon fleeing Hell, disclosing no sympathy for his new abode. He is indeed the first one to flee both from the place *per se* and the pain it evokes. The influence of the jungle upon Kurtz is exceptional: spellbinding, yet vicious. Thus although Kurtz is the one of those characters whose dwelling is always with them, he is, in truth, symbiotically joined with his adored abode. The severance, obviously, quickens his demise.

In the final passage of the novella appears the figure of Intended, the enigmatic female, who as other women in Conradian fiction, "remains in an idealized and imaginary realm of subtlety and beauty, removed from harsh realities" (Krajka, 50). Along with the savage mistress, she profoundly loves and admires Kurtz. She seems to occupy much of Kurtz's mind; his thoughts invariably revolve around "my Intended, my station, my career, my ideas" (YS, 147). Her devotion towards a lost soul seems unshakeable to the last moment when, truthfully as never before in her entire lifetime, she discloses her unquenchable devotion during her encounter with Marlow: "I believed in him more than any one on earth – more than his own mother, more than – himself. He needed me! Me! I would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance. [...] Nobody near to understand him as I would have understood. Perhaps no one to hear." (161). Most significantly, Kurtz's deplorable existence was less burdensome for him because of his living memory of his Intended.

Milton's Satan, on the other hand, has no one able to love him unconditionally. Despite his position as universal idol and King, he is miserably lonely, unloved, hollow (as the divine scale demonstrates at the end of Book IV) and emotionally forlorn. "Satan, even more than Adam and Eve, is an exile from his true home, doomed to perpetual restlessness and struggle" (Potter, 103). Other demons obey him only through apprehension of their changed situation in Hell. They wish to do anything rather than to love him absolutely. Satan

returns from his supposedly successful mission as a supreme vanquisher only to be thrust into unbearable isolation and mayhem, yet with “a crowd / Of ugly serpents” (X. 538 – 9), around the infernal Tree of Knowledge to chew “bitter ashes” (566) in their damnation.

Admittedly, Milton and Conrad reveal strong discrepancies in their concepts of evil. Generally, Milton, as Puritan, attaches evil religious connotations, whereas Conrad sees it as a section of societal reality. Yet, there are several convergent strands of thought. First of all, they both discern evil as a rebellion against established rules and the ensuing isolation – geographical, emotional, psychological and moral. Kurtz unmistakably experiences both geographical and self-imposed psychological isolation, a token of his escape into a fantastic realm. Satan, due to his rebellion, is thrust into moral, geographical and psychological seclusion.

Both writers also see evil as an abuse of free will and a violation of justice leading, at times, not only to moral and geographical enslavement of those inflicting iniquity but also to their collapse. Both Kurtz and Satan are indeed fallen due to their degeneration. Furthermore, they perceive evil as characterized by falsehood and hubris; lack of self-knowledge and self-restraint; moral hollowness and emptiness. Similar to Kurtz, who several times is called “hallow”, in Book IV Satan is depicted as extremely weak and artificial though placed on divine scale.^{viii} Most importantly however, evil is a fundamental requirement of the development of human consciousness. Knowledge of evil enables one to solve eternal dilemmas. It is inevitably a reality permitting one to perceive oneself as well as the world around him as a battlefield on which good and evil are constantly struggling for a human soul. It is a reality that motivates one to take conscious, often hard decisions as a token of man’s free will.

This article is offered as a preliminary study which might encourage other researchers to examine other possible links between Satan and Kurtz. I have chosen only those which seem most important, thought-provoking and conspicuous.

Other comparisons may explore these icons of iniquity in relation to such cultural concerns as Puritanism and its concept of iniquity or to Darwinian theory responses to it. Other approaches might focus on the concept of the archetype as a model for examining the matrix of implications between Kurtz and Satan. My study could also be the foundation for more reflective comparisons of places in which evil geniuses exist and develop their wicked aptitudes.

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NOTES

ⁱ Satan as a spellbinding literary figure has an extremely rich cultural history in western thought and art. One of the most impressive paragons of literary expression of evil incarnate is Dante's vision in Canto 34 of *The Inferno* which delineates Satan as the "creature eminent in beauty once" (18), but now as a chief of fallen angels, the "Emperor, who sways / The realm of sorrow, at mid breast from the ice / Stood forth" (27 – 29) daring to "scowl upon his Maker, well from him / May all our misery flow" (34 – 35); the wicked spirit depicted as "enormous as became / A bird so vast" (43 – 44) and who at "every mouth his teeth a sinner champ" (51) being in fact "evil so extreme" (78).

ⁱⁱ References to Milton are to *Paradise Lost*.

ⁱⁱⁱ In truth, Marlow's perilous mission is "seriously hampered by extensive shallows, which are impossible to recognize, and by a complete lack of navigation marks" (Krajka, *Isolation*, 140), but most importantly, it is perceived as an endeavor "undertaken to penetrate to the essence of Kurtz's isolation and the colonizer's conduct" (105). Besides, although it is often interpreted as a descent into the unconscious self, it proves to be also an exploration of man's capacity for evil. What is more, the journey, easily associated with a hero's descent into the underworld is both a quest for self-knowledge and "an essential part of the protagonist's learning process" (Lothe, 184). Finally, it becomes "the new version of the traditional entering into Hell" (216), comments Watt. Translations of all Polish quotes included in this article are mine.

^{iv} Dąbrowska writes of a "mysterious agent Kurtz the only one amongst this plundering and destructive horde of people, who represents talent, intellect and program. He is the only one who could give a meaning to this sinister play" (89). What is more, Kurtz, delineated as a lonely hero, according to Krajka, "has to rely exclusively on himself when coping with mounting difficulties. The outcome of a confrontation with nature either emphasizes his ethical excellence, or partly lessens his condemnation" (31).

^v At the beginning of the novella, memories of the ancient, fearless battles are cherished. "The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowned with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea" (YS, 47). This anticipates the appearance of someone who further in the novella will be one of those "men enough to face the darkness" (49). This man is Kurtz who seems to be powerful enough to face the darkness and iniquity of the infernal jungle, but unfortunately the force of his Hell appears to be so destructive that he is destined to fall as Satan does during his military encounter with God.

^{vi} Referring to Conrad's protagonists, Saracino avows that the "characters are indeed figures in and of transition both through space, time and the seasons of life" (76).

^{vii} Only the key hierarchical figures participate in the dispute. "My sentence is for open war" (Milton, II. 51) says Moloch, so blinded by infernal hatred that he is unable to perceive the simple truth that "Omnipotence cannot be shaken" (Waldock, 67). The next suggestion is put forward by Belial, who claims that he "should be much for open war" (Milton, II. 119) but after having suffered the results of that terrible fall, the fallen angel is aware of God's power and knows that even if:

[...] all Hell should rise
With blackest insurrection [...]
[...] our great Enemy,
All incorruptible, would on his throne
Sit unpolluted,

II. 135 – 9

The last words, as always in the epic, belong to Satan himself:

[...] All things invite
To peaceful counsels, and the settled state
Of order, how in safety best we may
Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite

All thoughts of war. Ye have what I advise.'
II. 278 – 83

This excerpt shows that Satan, even after the act of disobedience against his Creator, marking his gradual moral suffocation, remains a being with free will and intelligence. He can think constructively and take important decisions.

^{viii} In Book IV, Satan and the Archangel Gabriel are engaged in a verbal struggle during which God hangs out scales. Gabriel slanders the Fiend deplorably:

'Satan, I know thy strength, and thou know'st mine,
Neither our own, but given; [...]
[...]
[...] For proof look up,
And read thy lot in yon celestial sign,
Where thou art weighted, and shown how light, how weak,
If thou resist.' The Fiend looked up, and knew
His mounted scale aloft; nor more, but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of Night.
IV, 1006 – 7, 1010 – 1015

Like Satan who proves to be morally empty, Kurtz is "hollow at the core" (YS, 131). The German word Kurtz meaning "short" carries a pejorative connotation pointing to protagonist's deficiency, in the similar way as Satan's seeming magnificence is shaken while experiencing unbearable pain at losing his prime position as the first cherub. He complains:

[...] they little know
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
Under what torments inwardly I groan;
While they adore me on the throne of Hell,
With diadem and scepter high advanced,
The lower still I fall, only supreme
In misery.
IV. 86 – 92