

Marlow's character registers progress from innocence to experience. Marlow confesses that he is 'a silly little bird'. He knows that he is naively ignorant of the nature of existence, conveyed by the image of darkness. As an innocent young man, he has still to discover the meaning of good and evil, to judge and redeem himself in a world of ambiguous and ominous portents. This becomes clear when he encounters the two women knitting black wool in the Company's office in Brussels; he says, "an eerie feeling came over me." As he sails farther, he becomes increasingly aware of his position in the world. He is alienated from the ordered principles of social environment and alone in his confrontation with the Dark Continent. His alienation is increased with the recognition of the irrational behaviour of his fellow Europeans. The more he learns of their corruption, the more he is estranged from them. He tends to rely more and more on the values which

he personally, acquired as a
seaman, the values of duty,
discipline and order. He has
embarked on a journey of knowl-
edge and he must depend solely
on his inborn strength to carry
him through.

Marlow's quest is for
the realization of the heart of
darkness represented by Kurtz.
Marlow, like Kurtz, is one of
the new gang, 'the gang of virtue'
and for Marlow, the unseen
apostle of light, Kurtz, becomes
the alternative to the apathetic
agents. Approving fidelity, order
and discipline of which light
becomes symbolic, he abhors dark
disorder. But morality involves
choice. Compelled to choose between
the pilgrims and Kurtz, Marlow
chooses the latter because Kurtz,
unlike the others, has embraced
evil and is aware of the forces
of good and evil in his own
being. With the others evil is
an apathy devoid of existence.
As a result it is to the
positive character of Kurtz that

6

Marlow finally turns. What he learns inspires his illumination. Marlow is no longer naive. He cannot identify with social codes and behaviour because, to adjust to society, Marlow would have to reject his illumination. He would be false to himself. Unable to accept the illusions of the 'sepulchral city', Marlow bears the burden of guilt and suffering that accompanies such knowledge, entirely alone. He deliberately lies to the intended, the, the beloved of Kurtz and the representative of the 'sepulchral city', because he does not want to cause her suffering. Marlow, thus, has learned how to exercise responsibility and compassion. He must live alone with the truth, yet ironically, the reward of his victory over the elements of evil is his knowledge of human limitations.