

# Joseph Conrad and Edgar Allan Poe: The Examiners of the Dark Human Psyche

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU**  
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**ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

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**DIPLOMSKI RAD**

**JOSEPH CONRAD AND EDGAR ALLAN POE:  
THE EXAMINERS OF THE DARK HUMAN  
PSYCHE**

**Zagreb, rujan 2021.**

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## SUMMARY

This thesis will analyze the way Joseph Conrad and Edgar Allan Poe examined the dark human psyche. It is aimed at providing an insight into how their lives affected their literary work as well as how they explored the dark part of the human mind in it. The thesis is divided into three main parts: the overview of the horror both authors witnessed through their lives, the influence they had on one another and also on the field of psychology, and the comparison of the selected literary works.

The first part of the thesis grants an overview of the difficulties Conrad and Poe dealt with and also the way horror is created in the human mind.

The second part compares Conrad's and Poe's literary work. It compares their topics, themes, motifs and symbols. Moreover, it analyses and compares the development of the atmosphere and also characters of the selected literary works— Conrad's novels *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* and Poe's short stories *The Fall of The House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Mask of the Red Death* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

The third part discusses the influence Poe and Conrad had in investigating the darkness of the human mind and why they are deemed as the examiners of the dark human psyche.

Key words:

Conrad, Poe, horror, human psyche, darkness

## SAŽETAK

U ovome radu istražiti će se način na koji su Joseph Conrad i Edgar Allan Poe ispitivali mračnu ljudsku psihi. Cilj mu je pružiti uvid u način na koji su njihovi životi utjecali na njihovo književno stvaralaštvo te kako su istraživali tamni dio ljudskog uma u istome. Rad je podijeljen na tri glavna dijela: pregled užasa kojima su oba autora svjedočila tijekom svojih života, utjecaj koji su imali jedno na drugo, ali i na polje psihologije, te na usporedbu odabranih književnih djela Conrada i Poea .

Prvi dio rada prikazuje teškoće s kojima su se Conrad i Poe susretali u životu te način na koji se užas stvara u ljudskom umu.

Drugi dio uspoređuje Conradov i Poeov književni rad. Uspoređuje njihove teme, motive i simbole. Isto tako analizira i uspoređuje razvoj atmosfere, ali i likova odabranih književnih djela - Conradove novele *Srce tame* i *Lord Jim* te Poeove *Pad kuće Usher*, *Crnu mačku*, *Jamu i njihalo*, *Masku Crvene smrti* te *Izdajničko srce*.

Treći dio razmatra utjecaj koji su Poe i Conrad imali na istraživanje tame ljudskoga uma i zašto se smatraju ispitivačima tamne ljudske psihe.

Ključne riječi:

Conrad, Poe, horror, ljudska psiha, tama

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The darkness of the human psyche is an omnipresent topic in most books. The good cannot be shown without the bad; the light cannot be shown without the dark. Two prominent authors devoted most of their writing oeuvre to the darkness of the human mind – Edgar Allan Poe and Joseph Conrad. Benin claims that today Poe is recognized as one of the foremost progenitors of modern literature, in both horror and detective fiction, and also in its more complex and self-conscious forms, which he considers the essential artistic manner of the 20th century. (Benin, 2020, p. 6) On the other hand, Conrad is considered to be one of the best novelists that were intrigued by profound themes of nature and existence. In his works, he incorporated the experiences that he gathered during assigned voyages, navigating towards moral conflict and the dark side of the human psyche. Both Poe and Conrad were trying to illustrate how the human mind functions in given circumstances and how it chooses the good or evil in a particular situation. People have got the free will to act upon their desires and urges. Conrad looks around himself and describes people's reactions within that frame, whereas Poe actually looks inside of his mind to write some compelling stories about the human darkness. Both talk about gruesome horrors around them, making it evident that the darkness is creeping up on everyone; it is just the matter of an individual, whether they will address it or not. Farkas claims that the purpose of writers' addressing this problem is to illuminate areas of darkness to render truth visible for a moment- (Farkas, 1972, p. 2) The reader gets a glimpse of the reality that seems to be hidden from their view initially. Furthermore, both Poe and Conrad wove a certain sense of eeriness and mystery into their work to evoke intriguing feelings that readers do not want to control: "Both Conrad and the Symbolists convey a certain sense of eeriness, mistiness, and mysteriousness that leaves the reader a bit uneasy— uneasy not as a result of any lack of artistic craftsmanship, but uneasy in the sense that the literary work has stirred unknown feelings, given shape to others vaguely understood, and at times has expressed quite exactly those hidden, spiritual motions which occur at a level where, as Verlaine says, the exact and the undefined combine. (Farkas, 1972, p. 1) Subsequently, this thesis will provide a brief overview of the darkness Conrad and Poe experienced in their early life. It will also discuss how they both examined the same darkness throughout their literary work by depicting certain atmospheres and characters by using similar themes, motifs, and symbols. The last part focuses on Conrad and Poe as predecessors of the psychology of the dark human psyche that we know of today.



## 2. THE LIVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND JOSEPH CONRAD

Poe did not have to go far to get an insight into the dark human psyche because he was granted it by the turbulent life that had been imposed on him by the harsh reality of life. On the other hand, Conrad deliberately set himself off into the voyages that forced him to look around, and consequently, he got an insight into the inner human darkness. Both Conrad and Poe wrote their literary works based on their own experiences of life. They both experienced the same darkness and horror but in different forms. Horror from within himself allowed Poe to become one of the most prominent American authors, whereas Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has become one of the most read and debated works of fiction in the English language because Conrad plumbs the depths of human consciousness to explore the dark side of the personality. (The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., n.d., p.2) The same source argues that one of the reasons for such acclaim is due to his captivating sophisticated narrative, as well as elegant prose style. Both Conrad and Poe shared the trait of telling the story from personal experience and portraying the emotions they have gathered while encountering certain situations. Emotions and experience prevail because the opinion is formed based on experience and not facts. Furthermore, the intensity of emotions is achieved by the disbelief it produces and the inability to tell the story as it is, since the horror we experience distorts our view of reality. (Wernick Fridman, 2000) Conrad and Poe used this premise to captivate the reader into the horror they had experienced. They lived through the horror and wanted to share it with their readership, making it apparent that the horror is all around us. In the following sections, there will be more intricate details about Conrad's and Poe's lives that have shaped them into the authors they are known as today.

### 2.1. *The Horror Within – Edgar Allan Poe*

Many argue that Edgar Allan Poe is the creator and also the master of horror (Sun, 2015, p. 94), but it is frequently left to the reader to conclude where that horror comes from. The following section gives an insight into Poe's childhood, which seems to have influenced Poe the most as a writer, but also into the years he spent struggling to live an ordinary life as an ordinary human. It is important to emphasize that Poe should be looked at through the prism of being in contrast

with his environment, not only as an outcast that could not assimilate: “He is best understood in contrast but not in conflict with his environment.” (Hobson Quinn, 1997, p.xi)

Poe lived a troubled life. Only one year after his birth, in 1810, his father left him. A year later, his mother died. Some critics say that that was the moment where it was certain he was doomed to live a miserable life of solitude. (Sun, 2015, p. 97) On top of that, his brother died young, and his sister lost her mind. Having become orphaned, he developed sympathies with Frances Allan, who took him to her family’s house, where he stayed till his adulthood. However, her husband, John Allan, soon started having quarrels with young Poe. Tensions grew ever stronger as Edgar and John had constant clashes regarding money. Poe kept asking for money that he would later spend on either alcohol or gambling. (Bouchelouh and Benguesmia, 2019, p. 16) This made John furious, and he often refused to keep on feeding his addictive tendencies, which created a more extensive gap between the two. Entering university seemed to direct Poe on a path that was considered predestined for him: “Soon after Poe entered the University of Virginia in 1826, he displayed the behaviours that would determine the course of his short, difficult life: money troubles, intellectual brilliance and taste for a drink.” (Harrison, 1992) The lack of money was an ongoing problem for Poe; he had to leave the university and join the army, during which he started publishing his work. Soon after, in 1829, another prominent female figure in Poe’s life passed away – Frances Allan. This temporarily reconnected John Allan and Poe – John agreed to help Poe again, but as hostility started to reoccur, Poe parted his ways with him and returned to Baltimore, where his cousins lived. His aunt, Maria Clemm, welcomed him into her home. She had a daughter, Virginia Clemm, who had become Poe’s wife at the age of thirteen. His life being permeated with poverty, grief, and also difficulties regarding establishing himself as an author navigated Poe towards investigating the darkness that seemed to be clouding over him. His wife died at the age of twenty-four, leaving Poe shattered. Edgar Allan Poe lost another woman he loved, which led him to alienation and further substance abuse.

The absence of those women played a huge role in his literary work. Since his real life was permeated with loss and death, his stories were too. Poe said: “The death, then, of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world.” (Poe, 2011)

One of the most frequent themes in Poe’s literary works is the portrayal of dead or dying women. It is believed that the foundation for this lies in the immense grief and loss that he

experienced after the death of his mother, adoptive mother and his young wife. Furthermore, Poe's constant encounters with the deaths of his loved ones pushed him to look deeper into the core of his mind and heart. He suggests that those are the origin of terror (horror) that is around us: "If you find that terror was always the theme in most of my works, I insisted that the terror was not Germanic, but from the heart and I interpreted the terror from its reasonable source and drove it to its reasonable result." (Poe, 2016) The inevitable feeling that is evoked when reading Poe's stories is the one of terror. He takes it and molds it in a way where it engulfs the reader, without leaving any room for comfort: "Poe created a nightmare for all human beings in which there were no religious belief to comfort the soul." (Sun, 2015, p. 98) Poe incessantly attempted to step deeper into his own soul to find the terror that he thought was lurking there, and then he ascribed it to all human beings. It is believed that he devoted himself to interpret the terror of the soul because he found that same terror within himself:" Poe's short stories communicate a world of terror that comes straight from the depths of his own troubled mind." (Bouchelouh and Benguesmia, 2019, p. 3) Being surrounded by the deaths of his loved ones, he used this theme in his stories to mirror his own mental state: "Poe had an eye to death dance which symbolized the inevitability of death; his stories were some of the most frightening and strange ever written; it was written in a tone of mournful, desolate style; but it was a mirror of Poe's own miserable life and consistent with the purpose of his creation." (Sun, 2015, p. 98) The horror he found within himself shaped him as a unique writer who has left a great imprint on American literature, often prevailing those borders and influencing international literature as well. Poe's stories followed his life; they mirrored his inner reflection – Poe's stories are short, full of terror and mystery, as Poe's life was. He died at the age of forty. The cause of his death remains a mystery up to this day which enhances the validity and the morbidity of the premise that the horror Poe found within is also the horror that he saw in the world around him.

## *2.2. The Horror Beyond – Joseph Conrad*

Joseph Conrad was born as Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski in 1857. He was the only child of a patriotic Polish couple living in Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire. He was close to his parents, his father was a translator, and his mother was believed to be a kind lady but with quite frail health. This bond was soon broken when his father got arrested for allegedly taking

part in political activities against the Russians. (CliffsNotes Editors, n.d.) Conrad and his mother went with him to northern Russia, where he was exiled, but his mother died three years later due to the hardships of prison life. Conrad was sent to live with his relatives. His father died four years later. Conrad and Poe shared the same destiny: they both lived with adoptive families and relatives because their parents died at a young age. As Poe had a deep bond with his mother, Conrad had the same bond with his father. After his death, Conrad developed a strong feeling of melancholy that has also marked most of his literary work. Moreover, the first signs of Conrad's situational depression can be traced down to when he was seventeen. Allegedly, Conrad has attempted to commit suicide by shooting himself in the chest, but the reasons have remained unclear. Some claim it was because he became heavily enmeshed in debt when he was in Marseille, whereas others claim he had his first love affair that ended up disastrously. Conrad reportedly told people that he had been wounded in a duel, but he has likely been recovering from a suicide attempt.

Conrad was destined to be a sailor. As a child, he showed a point on a map, the center of Africa, the heart of Africa, and said he would go there when he grows up: "One day, putting my finger on a spot in the very middle of the then white heart of Africa, I declared that someday I would go there ... It is a fact that, about eighteen years afterwards, a wretched little stern-wheel steamboat I commanded lay moored to the bank of an African river." (Conrad, 2007) In the 1880's he passed the examination for a second mate in crew and which took him to the Far East for the first time. This proved to be an important event in his life since it gave him an incentive to write his major literary works. He used his real-life experience as a foundation to build his fiction upon. The heart of Africa became the heart of darkness later in his life, from which his novel *Heart of Darkness* emerged. His innocent childhood dream came to life: he was a commander of a Congo River steamboat. However, his childhood dream seemed to take an unexpected turn; the heart of Africa became the heart of evil. He described his trip as a journey to the deepest and darkest part of a human mind: "What he saw, did, and felt in the Congo are largely recorded in "*Heart of Darkness*," his most famous, finest, and most enigmatic story, the title of which signifies not only the heart of Africa, the dark continent but also the heart of evil—everything that is corrupt, nihilistic, malign—and perhaps the heart of man." (Britannica Editors, n.d.) The trip to Congo was euphemistically traumatic for Conrad, for he had seen the terror he had never anticipated: "A great melancholy descended on me. Yes, this was the very spot. But

there was no shadowy friend to stand by my side in the night of the enormous wilderness, no great haunting memory, but only the ... distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration. What an end to the idealized realities of a boy's daydreams!... "(Conrad, 2007) Conrad was supposed to stay for three years in Congo, but he quit after just one trip on the river, having acknowledged to himself that Europeans self-declared mission of promoting progress and civilization is actually a deceptive lie. Appalling greed, violence and hypocrisy in the heart of Africa made him leave in despair.

In 1895 he married a 16 years younger woman named Jessie George, who is claimed to be the reason for his literary career pursue. Like Poe, he constantly moved around while his life was struck by health difficulties, as well as poverty and his own traumas that haunted him throughout life. His pessimistic view suggests that idealisms are full of corruption and deception. Guo claims that his characters lift piece by piece the beautiful veil of western civilization and brings the readers to see the truth that man is living in a world of lies and deceptions that Conrad was aware of, the horror surrounding him became his own horror. Critics regularly agree on Conrad's work being filled with the versatility of conscious and unconscious motifs that are presented in the book: "The book has been read as many things, from an exploration of the individual psyche to a prophecy of genocide. Most of all, it's a meditation on progress." (Jasanoff, 2017) Also, they agree that Conrad was rightly sceptical about imperial promises of progress: "Conrad indicted the European imperialists who plundered Congo in the name of progress even while he portrayed Africa, in terms that seem racist today, as irredeemably backward." (Jasanoff, 2017) Even though Conrad witnessed and wrote about the horror in Congo, he never wanted to join the Congo Reform Association. The reason for that might be his childhood: he has been raised under the façade of an idealistic crusade against savagery, which presented his parents' struggles against tsarist Russia.

To encapsulate, Conrad is known for the highly symbolic nature of his prose. He speaks about atrocities in a very convincing way, yet, he leaves the reader with a sense of his stories only being a surface of the real truth. The surface is often being rejected by Conrad, indirectly alluding that there is more than what he describes in his stories. He is referring to the unconscious part of the human psyche. He has tried to produce an evocative art that inevitably

seeks to explore the inner consciousness of man. His literary works show a plethora of autobiographical elements, but he has also combined those with various artistic and literary devices. It is believed that the metaphor of a journey in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* enables readers to see that the quests the characters take actually represent a symbolic journey each man must undertake into his own psyche if he wants to gain an understanding of himself.

### 2.3. *The Horror of the Human Psyche*

The following section provides different prominent psychologists' views and definitions of the human psyche, as well as the correlation of horror and the human mind in literature. Also, it discusses the reason for immoral acts and ideologies that are frequent topics of Conrad's and Poe's works, as well as the relationship of the conscious and the unconscious. What causes horror, and why are people so drawn to it? Psychologists claim that fear is a primordial feeling that cannot be escaped. It can be traced down all the way back to the old folk tales.

Literature has frequently started being scrutinized by proponents of psychology. Since it studies all the processes of the human psyche, they are intrigued by all the useful information they can find in literature since it is claimed that literature is majorly an externalized symbolic representation of the human psyche. The term "psyche" comes from Greek *psukhē*, which originally meant breath, life, soul, but nowadays it means the totality of elements forming the mind, specifically, in Freudian psychoanalytic theory: the id, ego, and superego including both conscious and unconscious components. (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, n.d.) The term psyche is taken as a term for the totality as all psychological processes that are ongoing in the characters of Conrad and Poe.

Edgar Allan Poe reached the human psyche before most of the prominent psychologists did. His tales and fables demonstrate the unusual and the dilemma of psychological disorientation. His stories are shorter, but the after-effects are long-lasting. When it comes to Conrad, Freudian interpreters of literature claim that at the root of his writing are his highest hopes, his deepest fears, and his attempt to find the meaning in life. On the other hand, the Jungian point of view sees his work as a symbolic personification of the human mind in its struggle with existence, attempting to find meaning in life.

Previously mentioned founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, claimed that the human psyche could be divided into three parts: id, ego, and superego. The id part is comprised of the unconscious instinctual drives, superego navigates a person to what's right or wrong (it includes beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, etc.), and ego is the conscious part of our psyche that deals with reality. Another interpreter who analyzed psychological processes in literature, Luka, says that it is a bad thing when a moral man is identified with his conscious values, but a criminal who is identified with urges from the unconscious side of his nature, the better self splits off and confronts the ego as a personified consciousness in the role of a guardian angel. (Bruecher, Werner, 1927, p. 19) The importance of this lies within the advocacy of the dichotomy of the good and evil. This liberates people from responsibility. They diminish their own role in society not to feel responsible for the darkness surrounding them. We can learn how to be good or evil regardless of our genetic inheritance, personality or family inheritance. Furthermore, it is believed that evil comprises deliberate behaviour that is aimed at causing damage, humiliation, dehumanization, or using the authority and the power of the system to encourage others to do that for us. According to Zimbardo, many people hide behind egocentric tendencies, which create the illusion of their uniqueness. (Zimbardo, 2009, p.22) This happens to Conrad's Kurtz, whose ego surpasses the realistic picture and creates a God complex within himself. He sees himself as a god sent to the people in Africa.

Psyche helps us to know about the external world, making it apparent that the psyche and the environment are closely interrelated. This is why literature is used as a portal to the understanding of the inner world; it is believed it actually mirrors people's inner psyche. Different psychoanalysis proponents claim that the horror that one author may produce is the mirror of his psychological state of that moment: "Freud considers preoccupations with certain literary themes as indicative of the author's psychological, peculiarities; while the other, which originated with Jung, see in many extraordinary literary works manifestations of psychic contents from beyond the author's personal life, which is common to all of mankind." (Bruecher, Werner, 1927, p. 30) Once the reader engages himself in the literature work, it is inevitable to acquire an impression that changes the way we see things around us, consequently gaining a greater understanding of one's own nature, but also of other people in general. It is believed that literature is a great entryway to the understanding of the human psyche since it is its own product. Each part of it can provide an insight into the complex human behaviour that

cannot be left out while writing to the plot of a story. This is how literature can make people aware of different behaviour patterns and consequently help them understand the nature of the complex human psyche. Poe, a great predecessor of psychology as a science, tried to demonstrate through his literary work that horror comes from our soul. By portraying evil and horror, he achieves "the sublimation and purification of man's inner world." (Guo, 2011, p. 764) People are driven by the sense of fear; it unconsciously molds them into various shapes, compelling them to act in a certain way. Guo claims that no other passion than fear can effectively deprive people of actions and thoughts. (Guo, 2011, p. 764) It is believed that human beings possess two sides of a personality, one of them being wicked and perverse, inciting people to do evil without any apparent reason. Poe wrote about it in *The Imp of the Perverse*, implying that human nature has this darker side that comes out in various circumstances. Even though literature often mirrors the human psyche, sometimes the reflection can show some distorted images. Poe created characters that represented disturbed psyche that usually permeated their whole beings. Attempting to understand these characters requires thorough analysis, which leads to the conclusion that the human psyche is a complex set of processes that are ongoing at all times, whether we are aware of them or not. Poe used elements of horror and suspense to portray this complexity which made him a pioneer of psychology that we know of today. The following definition provides more insight into the horror as part of literature that Conrad and Poe worked on. Horror is a genre of literature that is often closely connected to the dark part of the human psyche: "Horror is a genre of speculative fiction which is intended to frighten, scare, disgust, or startle its readers by inducing feelings of horror and terror." (Bouchelouh and Benguesmia, 2019, p. 19) This can especially be observed through the dark romantics who consider the dark side of man to be instinctive and natural. They believed that one could not escape from the darkness, and this is why they pondered upon the negative aspect of human nature through horror stories.

### **3. THE WORKS OF E.A.POE AND J. CONRAD**

It is argued that Edgar Allan Poe, a prominent American author, and Joseph Conrad, an influential Polish writer, have significantly contributed to certain aspects of literature: novels, horrors, short stories, etc. Both have contributed greatly to the literary genre of horror that we



know today and the horror that can be created in our minds, representing the dark human psyche.

Poe wrote seventy tales, but he also wrote poems, essays, letters, etc. His most acknowledged works are his poems *The Raven* and *Annabel Lee*, and his stories *The Black Cat*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Today, Poe is known for his significant contribution to horror and detective fiction and for more complex and self-aware forms that represent the essential artistic manner of the 20th century. (Benin, 2020, p.3) He was also one of the foremost progenitors of modern literature, an ancestor of major literary movements as Symbolism and Surrealism, as well as the principal forerunner of the “art for art’s sake” movement in 19th-century European literature. (Benin, 2020, p.1) Poe claimed he wanted to introduce art into literature: “His self-declared intention was to formulate strictly artistic ideals in a milieu that he thought overly concerned with the utilitarian value of literature, a tendency he termed the “heresy of the Didactic.” (Benin, 2020, p.2) Poe nurtured not only aestheticism but also the purposeful use of the language that may uncover the authentic condition of the human mind. He contributed greatly to the short form in both fiction and poetry by establishing a highly influential rationale that is used in modern short stories nowadays. (Benin, 2020, p.1) This means that language and aestheticism are supposed to work together to provoke a deep reaction in a reader. Poe’s writings have a strong influence on American literature; his style reflecting some characteristics of the Romantic movement, precisely Gothic novels that brought the sense of terror, despair and melancholy into his work: ”The movement emphasized the cathartic experience of intense emotions which are an authentic source of artistic creativity.” (Kušić, 2020, p.7) It may not be wrong to say that his writings are the true representative of dark romanticism because they are overwhelmed with evil thinking, the darker side of human nature, death and destruction. The death symbolizes the physical death as well as the spiritual and mental death, which is the central theme of dark romanticism. When it comes to Poe’s criticism, he concentrated on the style and also the construction of the work that determined its efficacy or failure, which secured him an unapproached level of literary criticism. This analytical method granted him supremacy over his contemporaries, making his influence even more distinguished. This can be explained through the prism of him being one of the progenitors of the psychological explorations that were very frequent in literature, including Russian Realism and

French Symbolism. He used symbolic and allegorical language that resulted in stories with an enigmatic quality that are still being discussed today.

On the other hand, Conrad's oeuvre counts more than fifty titles. He is considered to be one of the earliest representatives of Modernism. Even though he did not speak English until 21, he picked it up quickly by conversing with his colleagues on ships since he had a profound talent for languages. What distinguishes Conrad from other authors from that age is that he was, instead of focusing on reality and history, aiming at horror, tragedy and isolation in his books, especially in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, for which he acquired his reputation. This established him as a prominent author: "Heart of Darkness, which was first published in 1898, established Conrad as a master of psychological fiction and a brilliant prose stylist. "(The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., n.d., p.13) Both of those literary works seem to truly depict the authentic darkness that is part of human minds. Multiple narratives Conrad uses represent multiple views on the topics he had written about, whereas symbols are used to provide his work with a deeper meaning. Also, multi-layer characterization represents multiple layers of the human psyche that the literature is permeated with. Moreover, Conrad is best known for his unique English prose style that incorporated numerous deep questions that society usually does not speak about. The themes of his works were mostly sea orientated, enriching his books with an adventurous undertone. However, interacting with his works often leaves the reader with a dark, pessimistic frame of mind that is bound to define an essential part of human existence: "His work was by turns adventurous and darkly pessimistic, interested in the traditional virtues of steadfastness and courage while also concerned with the epistemological lacunae that define modern existence and perception "(Domestico, n.d.) It is believed that Conrad left numerous ambiguous questions and symbols in *Heart of Darkness* because of his view on art (literary work): "To a reader who had asked about the meaning of one of his stories, he replied that a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion, and this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character." (Domestico, n.d.) Also, his significance is in him being the pioneer of the technique that has frequently been used in twentieth-century literature; he used multiple storytellers or perspectives in his books which allowed him a more intricate analysis of his characters: "Conrad was one of the first modern novelists to adopt multiple storytellers or perspectives for change, as he did in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. This technique allows

Conrad to carry out exploratory analysis of the characters and their motivations, which is a hallmark of his work and the work of many others. “(Mambrol, 2019)

Poe combined aestheticism, theoretical basis, as well as psychological intensity to evoke a profound, unique reaction from the reader. This shows his genius; Poe successfully mastered his artistic tendencies and psychological obsessions, combining them with his literary skills and establishing new forms that provide new authors with the ability to express themselves in their works fully. On the other hand, Conrad found a place and role in modern people in another way. He is one of the greatest symbolists in English literature. Conrad’s use of unconventional symbols is, to some extent, related to metaphors in many modern poems. Also, he has had an immeasurable impact on contemporary novels. Both greatly influenced the literary period they were part of; they greatly contributed to the analysis and examination of the dark human psyche. However, Poe explored the heart of darkness long before Conrad did.

### *3.1. The Comparison of Topics in the Works of E. A. Poe and J. Conrad*

Conrad and Poe might not seem to have many things in common at first; however, there are multiple underlying occurrences that disprove that statement. Poe influenced Conrad in a way where Conrad used the same horror, only in a different environmental setting. Eric McMillan said that Conrad’s *The Inn of the Two Witches* “is an Edgar Allen Poe-style tale of a night spent in a deadly house, a story that may come as a revelation to those who think of Conrad as working in only one genre or milieu.” This shows the value of Poe’s work in Conrad’s literature. The topics that both used are not necessarily closely related, but they necessarily lead to the same peak: enlightening the darkness that is subtly pervading human lives. Conrad’s most frequent topic is a journey to a particular place. The journey is a metaphoric representation of a trip to the innermost darkest part of the human psyche. Imperialism and colonialism that can be read about in his books are an excellent foundation for Conrad’s depiction of the actual human heart of darkness. Using these ideologies as topics allowed him to uncover the appalling truth about the deceptive behaviour of Europeans towards others who are not. Poe, on the other hand, wrote about humans’ deceptive behaviour towards themselves. His topics included madness, mental disorders, the duality of oneself, obsession, etc. Furthermore, isolation and alienation in

Poe's and Conrad's books frequently become the focal point of the characters' madness. As the characters detach themselves from mankind, they inescapably look deeper into themselves, and they consequently start being consumed by their own darkness. Another thing Conrad and Poe have in common is portraying the continual balance between the mental and the physical. They imply that the flesh is fragile, but the soul stays; it can come back, it can always haunt the ones who are still in the flesh. Despite these two authors seeming to take different paths, they do intersect. In the center of that intersection is the horror that they produced in their literary work. Historic occurrences are often woven into Conrad's topics, while Poe wrote about himself contemporaneously. Although their topics might not be closely related, the feeling of horror is. This is their main topic, portraying the horror that they encountered in their lives. Poe observed himself and wrote about the horror that originated from his soul, whereas Conrad observed the horror among others, oblivious to the fact that it would gradually become his own horror.

### *3.2. The Comparison of Themes, Motifs, and Symbols*

Themes, motifs and symbols in Conrad's and Poe's works are so closely connected and interrelated that it would be impractical to separate them one from another. There are a few reoccurring themes that both authors use to convey a particular message, while motifs and symbols are used to reinforce the central theme by eliciting similar images and feelings. The following sections will provide only a brief overview of this complex world of literary devices both Conrad and Poe used to enhance their portrayal of the dark human psyche.

There are three main themes that appear in Conrad's and Poe's works: death, madness, and duality. Death pervades each pore of Conrad's and Poe's characters, from Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* and *The Pit and the Pendulum* to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Death comes in different forms: murders, diseases, suicide, etc. Poe considered the death of a beautiful woman one of the most poetic topics in the world, hence its frequency in his works. (Poe, 2011) As previously mentioned, death and horror have been present among the human population since the beginning, and yet, it still remains a mystery. This is why the theme of death intrigues the readers in such grand proportions. Poe has encapsulated death in a depiction of humanity's internal and external struggles. The combination of death and the dark dilemmas

portray a more profound metaphor that can only be individually interpreted. Moreover, the death has a great value in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The deaths of the Congo population are insignificant, but the death of Kurtz is the culmination point of the book, the most prominent event of it. It shows that even the invincible human is very fragile when faced with death.

The next theme deals with madness and the absurdity of one's actions. The ground for madness in Conrad's books is usually a mental disorder that is developed by an individual being isolated from society: "Madness, in *Heart of Darkness*, is the result of being removed from one's social context and allowed to be the sole arbiter of one's own actions." (SparkNotes Editors, n.d) We can see this happening to Kurtz; he secluded himself from society, creating a world for himself which led to brutal megalomania. Alienation, thus, is a frequent motif in Conrad's and Poe's stories. Furthermore, madness is almost omnipresent within Poe's characters: Usher's hypochondria escalated and led him to bury his sister alive, the narrator of *The Tell-Tale Heart* killed a man solely for his eyes, the narrator of *The Black Cat* claimed that his mind under the influence of substances made him do things he did not want to do: "The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body, and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame." (Poe, 2015, p. 183) All these examples portray mental instability that manifests itself in various ways. Poe calls this the imp of the perverse; it makes you do things you should not do: "... perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart - one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law merely because we understand it to be such?" (Poe, 2015, p. 183) That leads to the conclusion that both authors discuss madness as an essential part of human existence.

Another prominent motif of Conrad and Poe are the female characters. Their role varies in most tales of Poe and Conrad, but what they usually have in common is their beauty and fragility. Females in *Heart of Darkness* are deemed to be blindfolded from reality, preferring to live in their world of illusions. (Guo, 2011, p.765) Kurtz's Intended believes Kurtz has been doing great deeds for his whole life while he was, in fact committing brutal atrocities. Women instead

shut themselves in their world of lies because it is easier for them than to confront the harsh reality of life. The painting that Marlow saw in Brickmaker's room depicts the role of females in the books; they are holding a torch while blindfolded. They can bring the light, but they refuse to see. On the other hand, Poe portrays his female characters as divine beings that everyone can quickly get fascinated with; however, they are often frail in health. In *The Fall of The House of Usher*, Madeline suffers from catalepsy and wreaks havoc in her brother's life. Even though females are not necessarily the protagonists, they have a huge role in the shaping of protagonist characters.

The horror Conrad created in his work was meticulously thought out and conveyed to send a specific message: "The horror was deliberately enigmatic, and could be as plausibly interpreted as a condemnation of "civilization" as it could be a reckoning with the primal, universal capacity for savagery." (Jasanoff, 2017) Many considered sea voyages to lead to madness due to isolation from the society; however, it is not the sea that is the problem: "the problem . . . is not a problem of the sea, it is merely a problem that has risen on board a ship where the conditions of complete isolation from all land entanglements make it stand out with a particular force and colouring." (Britannica Editors, n.d.) The symbol of a journey in Conrad's books symbolizes the journey to our inner self, to the darkest part of us: "It is a fantastic, imaginative journey to find a man named Kurtz who has lost his mind in the African jungle. It is a journey into inner space, a metaphorical investigation into the turbid waters of the human soul. It is a nightmare journey into horror. (Jordison, 2015)

Darkness in Poe is just as ordinary as the light is. The interplay of conventional symbols helps the reader to identify themselves with the plot of the book they are reading. Moreover, Poe does not depict depressive thoughts in his works, but he tries to paint the ultimate circle of life in which death is essential to life; we cannot escape the darkness because it is abiding in the human existence, in our inner world. The motif of darkness paints the atmosphere in a negative way to prompt our dark mind to act upon its impulses, to "activate" the dark part of the human psyche. The symbols of darkness are also connected with Africa and Congo in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Black people are considered to be of less value, and hence, they need to be exterminated. The darkness is also symbolized by going to the innermost part of something, the middle of Africa, etc. The deeper we go into something, the less of the light goes through. This

means that the deeper we go into our mind, the darker it becomes; we decide whether we will take that journey into the heart of darkness.

### *3.3. The Comparison of the Atmosphere*

Conrad and Poe are considered to be experts of painting the atmosphere of a literary work. Both had a tendency to focus on the atmosphere of their books to immerse the reader into their narrative entirely. This way of writing allowed the reader to be fully exposed to the impact of true horror. The atmosphere in Conrad's books is dark and sad, with very little optimism or neutral tone. That positivity can only be noticed with Marlow, he narrates the dark environment around him, but he maintains an objective view. Moreover, the mystery of the unknown is frequently present in Conrad's settings. The reader feels as if they are in an open space that is frightening on its own – the horror of the undetermined unknown. The gloomy atmosphere is pressed against the readers, leaving them with a feeling of isolation and despair in that setting. The reader cannot fight against the darkness that is being portrayed in the book because it submerges them right into it. Furthermore, Poe had a similar way of depicting the emotions he wanted the make the readers feel. He would deliberately dilute the background and time of the stories to be able to focus more on the atmosphere itself. Critics say that Poe's atmosphere is frequently more complex than his characters. The atmosphere is dark and depressive, constantly exuding solitude and horror. At times Poe's descriptions of the space can emit a feeling of the width of it; however, that feeling is purposely invoked to trick the reader into the uncertainty, the width is never measured, and the reader does not get a true feeling of the setting Poe is describing which inevitably induce fear and a feeling of uncertainty. Poe never uncovers the details of the place the setting is taking place. The interior spaces are usually narrow and small, forcing the reader to feel claustrophobic to make them breathe heavier. Even when Poe tries to write about the measures of the places, it turns out to be a pure horror because it is filled with darkness and unpredictability. Poe's characters are surrounded by despair and fear by the imposed vast darkness of the atmosphere that is gradually built from the first to the last page of the book. Both authors paid a lot of attention to the atmosphere of the book. The atmosphere can be used as an enhancer or the background of the story. What Conrad and Poe did was used the atmosphere to affect the dark parts of the reader's psyche to invoke feelings of horror and fear.

Conrad gave more intricate descriptions of the settings, using his characters as the contributors to the horror he wanted to depict. Poe, on the other hand, uses readers to contribute to the creation of the horror, allowing individual fears and insecurities to influence the create the horror that can affect the reader in the most significant way. Both Conrad and Poe used atmosphere to get an insight into the darkness of the human mind so as to achieve a profound analysis of the soul.

### *3.4. The Comparison of Characters*

The characters of Poe and Conrad are externally different, abiding in various settings, but they fight the same inner battles. The following chapter will focus on Conrad's and Poe's characters' traits, similarities and differences, as well as compare the protagonists and the antagonists of Conrad's and Poe's selected works.

Conrad and Poe have contrasting ways of depicting characters. Conrad's novels give far more insight into the depths of the characters psyche, while Poe's short stories often leave the reader an open interpretation of the character. Since we are comparing different genres of literature of the selected works of the two authors, we cannot analyze the characters in the very same generalized way. However, common traits and behaviour patterns can be noticed throughout reading and acquainting yourself with Conrad's and Poe's characters. The narrators in their works represent Conrad and Poe themselves, witnessing the horror they had witnessed. Their protagonists often become the victims of themselves, their ego and their complexes. Conrad's Marlow and Kurtz are provided with more intricate descriptions and situations in which their behaviour can be seen and analyzed. On the other hand, Poe does not intricately portray his characters. Still, he provides the readers with situations filled with suspense which indirectly disturb the reader, who can then sympathize with the character. Readers then, through reading, consequently become part of the character, themselves becoming aware of the darkness they have within themselves.

#### *3.4.1. Marlow and the Narrator*



We can read about Conrad's and Poe's view through the characters of Marlow and the commonly unnamed narrator of his short stories. Marlow appears in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, depicting the narrator in both. He does not act as an omniscient narrator; he is part of the story while narrating. Everything he shares with the reader is from his experience, eavesdropping or observing the setting he finds himself in. Once Marlow starts engaging in conversation with other characters, the readers are no longer guided by him.

The most considerable similarity between Marlow and the Narrator is painting the atmosphere filled with suspense, mystery, and horror. They build up tensions and expectations throughout the story for the reader. *The Fall of the House of Usher* draws the reader in by intricate, evocative scenes that elicit uneasy feelings and mixed emotions: "I do not know how it was — but, with my first sight of the building, a sense of heavy sadness filled my spirit. I looked at the scene before me — at the house itself — at the ground around it — at the cold stone walls of the building — at its empty eye-like windows — and at a few dead trees — I looked at this scene, I say, with a complete sadness of soul which was no healthy, earthly feeling. There was a coldness, a sickening of the heart, in which I could discover nothing to lighten the weight I felt. What was it, I asked myself, what was it that was so fearful, so frightening in my view of the House of Usher? This was a question to which I could find no answer" (Poe, 2012, p. 22) Also, in the story, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, Poe as the narrator, guides the reader through the story, even though it seems like he covers their eyes while doing so. He does not narrate as much as readers would like or need, but he keeps them in the dark, making them feel like they are part of the mystery that the story is building. While Marlow makes readers feel as if they are reading entries of his diary while he is retelling his stories, the Narrator acts inclusively; he embraces the readers as external characters of the story. The Narrator in Poe's stories is fixated on the horror part, foreshadowing a dreadful outcome, whereas Marlow, on the other hand, does not act gloomy. He narrates in a neutral tone. His journey to Africa was described as a neutral journey; it did not invoke the feeling of terror as standing before the house of Usher, even though the horror in both plots was equally present. Marlow does not consider Africa to be an evil place that needs extermination; he only thinks it needs education so it can progress to a more sophisticated civilization. On the contrary, the Narrator is certain the place he is in is evil, and nothing can be done to change that. This means that one of the most significant differences

between Marlow and the Narrator is the existence of hope, Marlow has it, but the Narrator is aware there is no solution to the intentions of an evil mind.

### *3.4.2. Mr. Kurtz and The Villains*

Mr. Kurtz and the Villains of Poe can be linked together by some common, at first glance, subtle traits that they share. It is important to emphasize that Poe's villains are often the narrators of the stories as well. The plot of the stories is continually active; the setting is narrated by the narrator while the characters are passive until the anticipated evil occurs. Then the narrator takes on the role of a protagonist that is often the villain of the story. To be precise, there is no archetypal villain in either Conrad's or Poe's work. Mr. Kurtz and the villains of Poe all have a good reason within themselves for what they are doing. The reasons might not be moral or rational, but they are valid to the characters themselves. Kurtz thinks he is a gift to people in Congo, and thus, this excuses his excessive brutality towards them.

Mr. Kurtz is claimed to be one of the most mysterious fictional characters in twentieth-century literature. (CliffsNotes Editors, n.d.) He is described as a walking tragedy, an amazing human being, a tyrant, a hero, a fallen human, a legend, and many more. However, in his mind, he is a resurrected god amongst the poor and the stupid. Someone who leads, someone who teaches, someone who is exceptionally clever, and also dominant. Kurtz is a perilously smart and competent man since he isn't just important for a colossal ivory business yet, in addition, gives the lie to the Company's "humanistic" aims in the Congo. He returns more ivory than the wide range of various stations set up and does it through exercising power and using absolute force and brutality., not caring because, in the end, he is not harming humans, only "beings". This scares men like the manager, who complains of Kurtz's "inhumane method", even though Kurtz is just doing what the Company overall is managing without concealing his activities behind a facade of good intentions. He is completely open about his lusts and what he is really after because he is not a liar; he is purposely evil, and he has accepted it because he believes he is doing something more important than collecting ivory. Marlow remarks that "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz," and Kurtz's very existence proves this to be true. (CliffsNotes Editors, n.d.) Europeans, or "the civilized world", all live in a deceptive cursed

reality by thinking that the progress they advocate for is humane. Kurtz, on the other hand, is not interested in how he is perceived by others. He asks not to be respected but to be feared. He gives no security in return, nor does he provide food. He only gives fear which becomes the catalyst of the work and desires he wants to be fulfilled. However, it is evident that his mind is deeply corrupted. He thinks he is doing something great, that he is a great gift to the indigenous people: "After Kurtz discovers the influence he has over the indigenous people, his insatiable lust for power takes him over the edge. In the Congolese jungle, Kurtz is not held accountable to anyone, and this sort of unrestrained power is more than one man can bear." (SparkNotes Editors, n.d) Yet, Kurtz did not come to realize that his biggest strength quickly started becoming his biggest weakness - his mind. So clear is the picture of him as a person whose mind became imbued with his own paranoia, his own ascent to the stars. He became obsessed with his apparent divine presence among the natives. While labeling Kurtz a morally "sick" man might seem comforting, he is actually an exaggeration of the impulses harboured in the hearts of men everywhere, because deep inside we are all Kurtz, we all have a part of him, materialism, a sense of superiority and domination over poor and backward, primitive.

Concerning Poe's villains like Roderick Usher from *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Prince Prospero in *The Masque of the Red Death*, or the unnamed protagonists from *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, they are all victims of their own fears, of their own mind – just like Kurtz. The difficulties they deal with are the cause of their mind, substance abuse or self-imposed isolation that frequently ends up in developing a mental disorder. Roderick Usher had hypochondriac episodes that are claimed to be borderline with schizophrenia. In addition, the protagonist from *The Black Cat* is aware of his evil behaviour triggered by inner rage and substance abuse – he let the inner perverseness take over his behaviour. This enhances the premise of the horror coming from within. The villain of *The Black Cat* used to love animals and was kind to them until he let the dark part of his mind pervade his life in a negative way. When it comes to Prince Prospero, he saves himself at the cost of other people. This narcissistic tendency amplifies the darkness of his mind that convinced him he is invincible before death. All these characters let their mind take over; they let the darkness prevail over their thoughts. This is what Poe called an impulse of the perverse that nudges you to do the things you either don't want to do or you shouldn't do: "Through its promptings, we act without comprehensible

object; or ... through its promptings we act, for the reason that we should not." (Poe, 2012, p. 279)

Conrad's Kurtz and Poe's protagonists may be exceptionally intelligent, but their greatest strength easily becomes their greatest weakness. It takes a streak of darkness to contaminate the light. It takes one authorized dark thought to contaminate the rest of the sane human mind.

### 3.4.3. *The Victims of Conrad's and Poe's Protagonists*

The antagonists of Conrad's and Poe's stories do not act as fillers of the pages, but they also play an important role; they enhance the protagonists' missions. They also help to build up and understand the story. Moreover, the antagonists frequently become the collateral damage; they become the victims of someone else's darkness. The people of color in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* become the victims of imperialism which has become an ideology Europeans forcibly imposed on the Africans under the connotation of doing a greater good. On the other hand, the characters in *The Black Cat* (written by Poe) present the victims of the narrator's madness; the narrator's wife, his black cat Pluto, and also another cat that reminded him of Pluto. Their death was solely the product of the narrator's mind that was fueled by madness and perversity. Furthermore, the narrator in Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* tries to convince the reader he is not insane and that he has full control of his mind before he kills an old man who has not wronged the narrator by any means. The narrator still decides to take his life because he feels uneasy by the old man's eye:

"There was no reason for what I did. I did not hate the old man; I even loved him. He had never hurt me. I did not want his money. I think it was his eye. His eye was like the eye of a vulture, the eye of one of those terrible birds that watch and wait while an animal dies and then fall upon the dead body and pull it to pieces to eat it. When the old man looked at me with his vulture eye, a cold feeling went up and down my back; even my blood became cold. And so, I finally decided I had to kill the old man and close that eye forever." (Poe, 2012, p.177)

This enhances Poe's premise that horror originates from the soul; it is nearly impossible to control the darkness of your mind if you consciously address its strength. Marlow (the

spokesman of Conrad), on the other hand, condemns the quest the Europeans have taken: “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.” (Conrad, 2007, p. 65) Again, the reason for the great atrocities that are described in *Heart of Darkness* is solely because of someone else’s different complexion of the skin. To encapsulate, the darkness of the human mind does not require a valid reason; it only requires the slightest motive to act upon.

#### **4. POE AND CONRAD – EXAMINERS OF DARK HUMAN PSYCHE**

Poe and Conrad are the examiners of the dark human psyche because of their contribution to psychology through their literature. While Poe was examining his own dark mind, Conrad was examining the darkness of colonialism and imperialism that were under a facade of “common good”. Jungian advocates claim that Conrad’s writing is “a symbolic personification of the human mind in its struggle with existence, attempting to understand its own true; nature and the whims of fate.” (Jordison, 2015) Both Poe and Conrad concentrated on the horror following the main characters of their books, depicting what the dark mind indeed looks like. Poe was the predecessor of psychological horrors representing the dark human psyche. Also, Poe used a lot of imaginary scenarios, fantasy and such while Conrad kept mostly to realism when the human mind is in question. This can be seen in their literary works: Poe explored various genres, including supernatural elements, while Conrad was focused on portraying the human darkness through the realistic setting.

Poe started writing horror stories in the nineteenth century exposing readers to gore and violence in an unusual way. His works are frequently categorized as psychological horrors. Psychological horror introduces the reader to the vile occurrences that are frequent in the everyday’s world. However, this genre does not provide them with comfort since it gives the reader the awareness of the evil that is coexisting in the world with them. Poe is not interested in solving the mysteries but exposing circumstances in which those mysteries occur, as well as illustrating how those mysteries influence the human mind and the feeling they evoke. Poe tried to question the origin of the madness that leads to the darkness. Poe’s appeal derives from the way he leaves an impact

on his readers by providing immediacy to abstract questions about life that triggers readers to look deeper inside themselves. “Poe explored what we have come to call the politics of knowledge—the ways in which the act of knowing structures and controls what can be known.” (Van Leer, 2018) Poe’s characters are attentively created with a subtle twist that is usually hidden deeper than the characters’ surface portrayal. They may appear normal at first glance, but they are often manic figures that have lost their mind, or they struggle with addictions that lead to obscure behaviour. This can be noticed in *The Black Cat*, where the Narrator’s (the main character’s) behaviour swiftly deviates from an animal lover to an animal abuser and a killer due to his alcohol addiction. Moreover, it can be noticed that the darkness first develops within one’s mind: “Poe demonstrates that monsters are not the things which live under our bed, but rather the things which live in our heads. The beast lies not without, but within.” (Dignam, 2019) Thus, the darkness of our own mind is the darkness that needs to be feared the most. Robert McKee claims that what pushes the darkness out is usually the pressure of a triggering event: “True character is revealed in the choices a human being makes under pressure - the greater the pressure, the deeper the revelation.” (McKee, 1997)

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad is believed to be an inexhaustible source for literary and psychological analysis since it is not only a voyage into inner Africa, but a trip into the inner part of our psyche: “...this story of colonial brutality is a mesmerizingly ambiguous voyage into the darkest parts of the soul.” (Jordison, 2015) It is claimed that Marlow’s ship was travelling to the soul of the man, not necessarily Congo itself (Jordison, 2015). Conrad is believed to have used a voyage to Congo as a metaphor for a voyage to the dark human psyche. He exposed all the darkness by condemning the evil of imperialism. Conrad’s contribution to the examination of the dark human psyche is also his “unique propensity for ambiguity” that leaves most of his literary utterances indefinite. (Jordison, 2015) Many commented on his works in the same way. \_\_\_\_\_ said the following about *Heart of Darkness*: “Trying to get hold of the novel’s meaning is like trying to catch smoke with your hands. The very act of describing it makes it harder to grasp – and that makes the challenge all the more enticing.” (Jordison, 2015) Melfi said the following about Conrad’s *Lord Jim*: “The intentional ambiguity which Conrad weaves into *Lord Jim* attests to his interest in changeable perspective, in subjective bias, and in the grey moral area he so often points to in his texts. While there may appear to be no clear answer to the question of whether Jim is a tragic hero, a narcissistic failure, or something in between, Conrad’s depiction

of Patusan seems designed to suggest that Jim has entered a psychological landscape representing his inner struggle with the forces within him-the dichotomous desire for peace and anonymity versus the desire for power and prestige-and his ultimate succumbing to vanity and fantasy. “(Melfi, 2017) Conrad’s psychological landscapes of his characters and plots have contributed significantly to the psychology of the dark human mind; his work grounded the findings and theories of modern psychology, especially those of psychological differentiation. Furthermore, he used his talents to go into a bit deeper analysis of the human psyche, as in analyzing not just the dark human psyche but the way it interacts with other humans and the effect it has on the environment. On the other hand, Poe used his own mind and darkness to explore possible/impossible scenarios where the darkness of the human mind can interact, almost like creating a playground for a dark human mind to play in. To encapsulate, Poe was explaining the human psyche more local effects and Conrad more global effects.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Conrad and Poe used various methods and grounds for depicting the horror of the dark human psyche. They devoted their literary work to exploring the innermost part of our soul and mind. They both tried to illuminate areas of darkness to render truth visible for a moment, giving the readers hope and trying to teach them that no darkness is eternal; however, they also tried to depict the reality of the inescapable darkness that is abiding within. They both experienced the same darkness and horror, only in different forms. As stated, for Poe, it was more direct and personal. Conrad, on the other hand, plumbed the depths of human consciousness to explore the dark side of the personality, acting as an observer, analyzing every part of the observed one. Since both experienced the horror, they wanted to share it with their readers, so they know it is all around them, but most importantly, within them.

Our psyche helps us to learn about the external world, making it apparent that the psyche and the environment are closely interrelated. This is why literature is used as an entrance to the understanding of the inner world; it is believed it can genuinely mirror people’s inner psyche. For this reason, literature has frequently been scrutinized by psychologists; it can captivate valuable psychological data since it is asserted that writing is significantly an externalized emblematic portrayal of the human mind. However, Edgar Allan Poe reached the human psyche

before most of the prominent psychologists did. His tales and fables demonstrate the unusual and dilemma of psychological disorientation. When it comes to Conrad, Freudian interpreters of literature claim that at the root of his writing are his highest hopes, his deepest fears, and his attempt to find meaning in life. This is why Conrad and Poe are the predecessors of the psychology of the dark human psyche that we know of today.

Poe didn't need to go far to get knowledge about the dark human mind since he was conceded by the fierce life that has been forced on him by the cruel truth of life. Conrad, on the other hand, intentionally set himself off into the journeys that constrained him to glance around, and subsequently, he got an understanding of the internal human obscurity. Both Conrad and Poe composed their works dependent on their own experiences of life. The two of them encountered similar obscurity and repulsiveness, only in various structures.

Conrad looks around himself and portrays individuals' responses inside that frame, while Poe glimpses within his psyche to think of some convincing anecdotes about human obscurity. Both discuss grisly abhorrences around them, making it clear that obscurity is crawling up on everybody; it is only the question of an individual if they will address it. Poe influenced Conrad in a way where Conrad used the same horror, only in a different environmental setting. The topics that both used are not necessarily closely related, but they necessarily lead to the same peak: enlightening the darkness that is subtly pervading human lives. Conrad's most frequent topic is a journey to a particular place. The journey is a metaphoric representation of a trip to the innermost darkest part of the human psyche. One of the most common themes in Poe's literary works is the representation of dead or dying women. Its root is believed to lie in the tremendous pain and loss that she experienced after her mother's death. The foster mother and his young wife urged him to see through his mind and the center of his heart from the bottom of his heart. Poe constantly tried to penetrate his soul, looking for the fear he thought was lurking there, and then he attributed it to all humankind. His readers believed that he set out to explain the horror of the soul because he found the same horror in himself. Poe successfully mastered his artistic tendencies and psychological obsessions, combining them with his literary skills and establishing new forms that provide new authors with an ability to fully express themselves in their works. Despite these two authors seeming to take different paths, they do intersect. In the center of that intersection is the horror that they produced in their literary work. Historic occurrences are often woven into Conrad's topics, while Poe wrote about himself contemporaneously. Although their



topics might not be closely related, the feeling of horror is. This is their main topic, portraying the horror that they encountered in their lives. The horror is powerfully depicted through the atmosphere of their works. Moreover, they displayed a similar affinity towards themes, symbols and motifs. Poe wrote about humans' deceptive behaviour towards themselves. His topics included madness, mental disorders, alienation, obsession, etc.; Conrad wrote about humans' deceptive behaviour towards others, atrocities, imperialism, colonialism and other. Most of their protagonists detach themselves from mankind, which inescapably leads them to take a deeper into themselves, and they consequently start being consumed by their own darkness. They believed that one could not escape from the darkness, and this is why they pondered upon the negative aspect of human nature through their horror stories.

Poe and Conrad majorly contributed to the analysis and examination of the dark human psyche because they found it within themselves. Just like Marlow undertakes a journey to Africa, humans undertake a journey into themselves. The deeper we travel, the more of the darkness we encounter. Conrad and Poe greatly prove this by their literary work. The darkness cannot be escaped because it is abiding in human existence, in our inner world. Once we acknowledge it, it is up to us whether we will use our heart of darkness or examine it and help others understand the true dark human psyche, just like Poe and Conrad did.

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### Izjava o izvornosti završnog/diplomskog rada

Izjavljujem da je moj završni/diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mojeg rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristio drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martinović", written over a horizontal line.

(vlastoručni potpis studenta)