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Escrevendo o Indizível: Horror e Desejo nos diários da Amazônia de Roger Casement, em La Vorágine, de Ricardo Eustasio River e No Coração das Trevas de Joseph Conrad

Escribir lo indecible: horror y deseo en los Diarios del Amazonas de Roger Casement, La Vorágine de Ricardo Eustasio River y En el corazón de las tinieblas de Joseph Conrad

Writing the Unspeakable: Horror and Desire in Roger Casement's Amazon Diaries, Ricardo Eustasio River's La Vorágine and Joseph Conrad's In the Heart of Darkness

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Resumo
A representação do ambiente da selva como um espaço estranho é compartilhada pelos textos de Casement, Rivera e Conrad em seu retrato das práticas extrativistas na América Latina e na África. A investigação de Roger Casement, de 1912, sobre as violações dos direitos humanos na Amazônia e o romance La Vorágine (O Vórtice), de José Eustasio Rivera, de 1924, descrevem a experiência de desorientação do ambiente da selva durante o boom da borracha, usando imagens sensoriais para evocar uma profunda sensação de horror, juntamente com descrições vívidas da exploração. Embora semelhantes a Heart of Darkness (Coração das Trevas), de Joseph Conrad, de 1899, os textos de Casement e Rivera usam sua imersão sensorial no ambiente estranho da selva para evocar seu poder e criticar a exploração e o colonialismo. Por fim, a estranheza da selva é revelada como uma crise de masculinidade e identidade ocidentais durante o início do século XX.
Palavras-chave: Extrativismo. Estranheza. Selva. Masculinidades. Colonialismo.

Resumen
La representación del entorno selvático como un espacio extraño es compartida por los textos de Casement, Rivera y Conrad en su retrato de las prácticas extractivistas en Latinoamérica y África. La investigación de Roger Casement de 1912 sobre las violaciones de los derechos humanos en el Amazonas y la novela de José Eustasio Rivera de 1924 La Vorágine describen la desorientadora experiencia del entorno selvático durante el auge del caucho, utilizando imágenes sensoriales para evocar una profunda sensación de horror junto a vívidas descripciones de la explotación. Aunque similares a El corazón de las tinieblas de Joseph Conrad de 1899, los textos de Casement y Rivera utilizan su inmersión sensorial en el extraño entorno de la selva para evocar su poder y criticar la explotación y el colonialismo. Por último, la extrañeza de la selva se revela como una crisis de la masculinidad y la identidad occidentales durante principios del siglo XX.
Palabras clave: Extractivismo. Extrañeza. Jungla. Masculinidades. Colonialism.

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Abstract
The representation of the jungle environment as an uncanny space is shared by the texts of Casement, Rivera and Conrad in their portrayal of extractivist practices in Latin America and Africa. Roger Casement's 1912 investigation of human rights abuses in the Amazon and José Eustasio Rivera's 1924 novel *La Vorágine* (*The Vortex*) both describe the experience of disorientation of the jungle environment during the rubber boom, using sensorial imagery to evoke a profound sense of horror, along with vivid descriptions of exploitation. Although similar to Joseph Conrad's 1899 *Heart of Darkness*, the texts by Casement and Rivera use their sensory immersion in the uncanny environment of the jungle to evoke its power and criticize exploitation and colonialism. Ultimately, the uncanniness of the jungle is revealed to be a crisis of Western masculinities and identity during the early twentieth century.
Keywords: Extractivism. Uncanny. Jungle. Masculinities. Colonialism.

The portrayal of the Amazon rainforest as an uncanny space is shared by two texts about the rubber boom in Peru and Colombia: Roger Casement's *Black Diaries* and José Eustasio Rivera's *La Vorágine* (*The Vortex*). The similarities between Casement's 1912 narrative and 1910 diaries of his investigation of human rights abuses in the Amazon region and Rivera's 1924 novel are striking in their descriptions of disorientation and hardship. In fact, the subtitle of Casement's text refers to the Amazon as "South America's Heart of Darkness," a reference to Joseph Conrad's classic 1899 work about the Belgian Congo. Both Amazonian narratives include visual and sensorial descriptions that paint the jungle in a way that impresses readers with the harshness of the climate and its constant oppressive presence. These texts, along with Conrad's, portray the cruel treatment of native workers and the oppressive nature of extractivist practices that decimate the environment and those who live there. The rubber barons and those running the trade display hegemonic masculinity in their treatment of workers as personal property to achieve the goal of meeting the global demand for rubber in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet the horror of exploitation is more comprehensible than the uncanny horror with which they describe the jungle.

The sensorial emphasis of these texts relies on evoking feelings and estrangement, drawing in readers to feel and suffer adversity and disorientation. For example, Casement's first-hand account undoes him as well as those who read it. In *The Vortex*, Arturo Cova, the protagonist and narrator, also becomes undone by the uncanniness of the jungle and its bewitchment. In my view, the words used by the narrators do not adequately express the experience of the tropical environment. I believe that these authors lack the words to describe the horror of exploitation and the crisis that lies within the "jungle narrative," as they spiral into the uncanny and irrational space of the jungle of the imagination. I will cite specific instances of how their language illustrates a sensuality and uncanniness of the jungle to examine what the authors may hide or repress. At times, it is a tabu sexuality that is mediated by the senses, and at others, it is the power of nature itself that displaces human agency. Often Westerners or outsiders find that the jungle is an uncanny place that forces the visitor to adhere to a different set of laws, some man made, some the law of nature. The presence of the uncanny captures a threshold experience unleashed in this estranged environment.

To understand the uncanny sentiment and its relationship to the jungle, we can call on Freud who argues that the uncanny is the opposite of the sublime, noting that the uncanny is that "class of terrifying which leads us back to something long known to us, once known to be familiar" (in LLOYD-SMITH, 1989, p. 1). This means that it brings us comfort, while its antonym "unheimlich" as something that undoes us. An event that is "uneasy, eerie, bloodcurdling" is uncanny (LLOYD SMITH, 1989, p. 3). Freud also says that the uncanny is something that is disorienting, meaning it is something repressed. It is the same feeling that one gets when becoming lost, be it in a big city – or in a jungle. He compares uncanniness to losing one's eyes as in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1817 story *The Sandman*, in which a young man fears his eyes being plucked out by a nefarious figure associated with his childhood fear of the Sandman. Freud connected the loss of the eyes with the castration complex, an element that evokes particular feelings of horror and the loss of bodily integrity. For Freud, a sense of horror is the dominant response to the "uncanny" and is a way of protecting oneself from something foreign or alien:

> Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves – all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them… to many people, the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead, is the most uncanny thing of all… And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it all, but was filled with a certain lustful pleasure – the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence. (In LLOYD-SMITH, 1989, pp. 14-15).

Finally, he argues that the "unheimlich" place is the entrance to the "heim" or "home" of all human beings that marks the division of their conscious and their unconscious mind (LLOYD SMITH, 1989, p. 15). Linked with the body and sexuality, the uncanny can also be evoked through our senses because it is linked to that which is oddly familiar.

According to Paul Maurette, the body's sense of touch is the forgotten or perhaps most repressed sense. In *Mediations on Touch*, he says that the sense of touch is both an external sensation of the skin and a sensation emanating from the interior of the body (MAURETTE, 2015, p. 14). According to Maurette, the senses are not independent faculties, nor are they perfectly discreet. They converge and borrow from each other. They have mutual needs and can confuse the other. One of the dangers of touch is that it is the initiator of the erotic. According to Lucrectius in *The Nature of Things* (1473), the five senses are like modalities of the haptic:

> For touch – yes, by the power of the gods! – touch is the key to all our physical sensations, whether a feeling be triggered by a foreign substance worming its way within, or something born inside the body itself inflict a pain; or when, in the conceiving act of love, the outward flow delights; or when the body's particles, struck by a blow, Are shaken up, and throw the senses in confusion. (LUCRETIUS, 1950, p. 40)

Touch is a neglected sense because it is associated with sex, and because once initiated, it

can become uncontrollable. Yet, as Lucrectius points out, touch is the key to all the other physical senses: "Only the body can touch or be touched" (LUCRETIUS 1950, p. 15). All of the senses are variations of the sense of touch, yet it is at times the hardest to convey in words. Vision operates out of images that are transmitted by the eyes, which is somewhat distant from the immediate sense of touch. Taste is a more embodied experience and occurs through our tastebuds, while smell occurs when atoms penetrate our nasal passages, and finally, hearing penetrates the ear canal and hits the walls around the eardrum (MAURETTE, 2015, p. 67). By calling on all the senses, both Casement and Rivera portray the sensual presence of the jungle to evoke the uncanny that eventually allows access to the repressed.

Casement and Rivera describe the jungle in an uncanny way that brings the senses to life. In Casement's diaries, the body is thrown into confusion through torture. As I will show, the sense of touch, the window into the erotic, comes alive in the works I analyze. One uncanny combination is Casement's description of torture alongside that of a young boy's genitalia. Rivera's text is also replete with alternating scenes of sex and torture. The jungle itself has horrific telluric scenes that function as a way into the repressed state of mind of the Western travelers who are consumed by everyday activities and rhythms. Finally, the distress of Rivera's characters and Casement's anguish contrasts with the madness of Kurtz, the central figure of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, who shows little moral remorse or identification with the bodies of the colonized until his deathbed.

The jungle of the Putumayo region located along the border between Peru and Colombia, is the setting for Roger Casement's work of investigative journalism. There, rubber was plentiful, and laborers were few. The *pueblos étnicos*[2] who inhabited the region were the only source of labor. The rubber barons saw these inhabitants as part of the landscape of the "great forest region threaded by many rivers which stretch from the forests of the Andes to the Brazilian frontier" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 78). The only way to extract the rubber was to force them to work. Casement came to the region as a representative of the British government, because there had been reports of Barbadian subjects torturing the *pueblos étnicos*. Upon his arrival in La Chorrera, Peru, one of the towns along the rubber trail, a Mr. Israel, one of the managers of the Peruvian Amazon Company, asked Casement, "What would you do, suppose the government were to offer you a large concession of forest land, up here, on which wild *"Indians"* dwelt and you could do nothing with it or with them until they had been conquered? What would you do?" (CASEMENT AND

[2] I use the term *Pueblos étnicos* in lieu of "Indian" as Casement uses in his journal, or indigenous (*indígena*). During the recent 2024 Latin American Studies Association conference.The reason I am using the Spanish term is that the translation in English has a different meaning. However, when quoting the writers of this time period, I will have to use the word "Indian" and "cholo" as they did.

MITCHELL, 1997, p. 80). Casement replied that he believed that there was a certain conduct that is expected between white people and their workers and that he would not accept such gifts under any circumstances.

Casement offered a different model of masculinity from that of the rubber traders. From the beginning Casement wanted to set himself apart from the representatives of the Peruvian Amazon Company, financed by British capital and in charge of most of the rubber extraction in the region. As an Irishman, Casement saw himself differently from other white men. He felt a visceral connection to the Huitotos, the local indigenous community that worked in the rubber trade and suffered physical abuse by the employees of the Peruvian Amazon Company. He believed that he had a duty to not only represent his government but also represent the Irish who themselves had been victims of violence under British rule. By empathizing with and advocating for the Huitotos, Casement feels a deepening sense of horror because he had also suffered the pain of colonialism. Yet Casement was also a man of his time, and although not considered white by the English or Americans, he likely ascribed to elements of the pseudo-scientific racism that was so prevalent at that time. His implicit exoticism or sense of superiority was seen in his desire for his friend Ward to paint one of the Huitoto boys. However, he had a unique ability to engage with both the Black people in the Congo and the native peoples of the Putumayo region, according to witnesses. He treated them in such a way that caused the native people to honor and respect him than other white men. The title of Angus Mitchell's book on Casement's *Report on the Congo* is subtitled "Through the Eyes of Another Race," making the problematic claim that Casement had the unique ability to see with the eyes of another race. Nevertheless, his focus on human rights and genocide that brought acts of torture to the consciousness of Europe set him apart from other travelers.

During his stay, Casement quickly uncovers the abuse and torture that so distress him. He observes that the indigenous workers are all essentially enslaved. They are paid through store credits and sold to competing rubber traders where they become perpetually indebted to their masters. The rubber trees and the workers are considered the personal property of the estate owner. For the rubber barons, the nation builders who seek to harvest rubber, no distinction is made between the exploitation of human resources and natural resources. There was one instance where Casement describes how an overseer named Carlos Miranda holds up the head of a woman whom he has decapitated, as a warning to all of the indigenous workers (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL 1997, p. 120). This must have traumatized Casement and served as a visual testimony of what the overseers would do with those who challenged their authority.

In addition to this testimony, Casement describes the case of a Barbadian who confessed to flogging workers many times, and the system of punishment was particularly perverse because the

chief of the group had to decide who was to be flogged. Casement said that some "would get 25 lashes, some 12, some 6, some 2, accordingly as the rubber was short. The black Barbadians charged themselves with the gravest crimes – killing and flogging Indians under the order of men who were in pay and employment of this British Company" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 126). Yet Casement believed that they were not nearly as guilty as the men who had ordered the crimes, since the Barbadians were essentially held captive by the managers of the Peruvian Amazon Company. They did what they were told to do. Casement explains that the "muchachos" were armed workers who often served as enforcers of the rubber traders' orders. While visiting one of the "muchachos" houses, Casement saw many men, and boys too, covered with scars, and often drawing the attention of others to this. Some of them had been branded with the trademark of Arana Bros. across their bare buttocks and upper thighs, including a boy of ten, who "had red weals across his backside quite recent" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 142). In another instance a man, Jiménez, showed the weals on his thighs and buttocks that he had gotten for not bringing enough rubber. He said many were put in "cepos" or stocks where they had been flogged, with many dying there (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 193).

In the side-by-side comparison of Casement's *Black Diaries* and its counterpart *White Diaries* (SAWYER, 1977) one can see how he was thinking both sensually and empathetically about the workers. Unfortunately, like most white European men of the time, Casement also saw the *pueblos étnicos* as objects of study, to be examined, painted, displayed, desired – and possibly sexually abused. For example, in the *Black Diary* entries of September 9th and 24th he describes a young "cholo" with an erection and gives the measurement of his penis, while he labels another by an indigenous word referring those with a huge erection during sleep. In the *White Diary*, on Sept. 29th, he says he had "never given life" (meaning engaging in sex) and considered himself "celibate," in spite of the many obvious sexual encounters he had with other men in Brazil and in Europe. For Casement, this is his repressed side of the uncanny jungle, that is both familiar yet unrecognized.

These contrasts between cruelty and sexuality continue in the *White Diary*, in which he describes on October 3 a new form of punishment of holding the boys under water for not processing enough rubber. Then in the *Black Diary* on Oct 4 he describes what sounds like group masturbation among the boys. On October 29 he describes a young Bora boy that he would like to take back to England and serve as an object for his friend Herbert Ward from Paris to paint. He says that this part of South America is unknown in Europe, conveying it as an exotic, unknown frontier. Finally, he describes the fantastic feat of a small boy who carries a load of rubber heavier than his weight named Omarino whom Casement later takes back to England with him.

Casement later said that the system was not merely slavery but extermination. "At least a slave was well-cared for and well-fed, so as to be strong for his master's work" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 142). The *pueblos étnicos* had no master who fed them or cared for them, they were simply here to be driven by lash and gunfire to collect rubber. In one instance when the indigenous boys were down at the river washing the rubber, one of the supervisors stood over them and held the boys underwater, almost drowning them. One of the Huitotos named Feraze Pinaima had been drowned in this manner. Casement says that:

> I am getting positively ill. My nightmare last night was a composite creature of all these criminals, a sort of Velarde-Jiménez-Aguero-Flores [employees of the Company], indescribably and bleary-eyed, sitting at the door of my room waiting for me. That was all. Just waiting. No wonder I yelled in my horrid sleep and roused the whole house! (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, 1997, p. 162).

Casement says that what he found in the Amazon was worse than his experience in the Congo, although it involved a smaller number of workers in a smaller region. He concludes that "the white man's world, I am beginning to think, is made up of two categories of men – compromisers and Irishmen. I might add Blackmen. Thank God that I am an Irishman, and I am not afraid to 'assume,' that I won't shrink the charge of 'exaggeration'" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL 1997, p. 184). He further states that "it is the 'blanco' type that pulls down the nation, the people with the skins of whiteness only," while the indigenous workers are "not only murdered, flogged, chained up like wild beasts, hunted far and wide and their dwellings burnt, their wives raped, their children dragged away to slavery and outrage, but are shamelessly swindled into the bargain" (CASEMENT AND MITCHELL, p. 302). The overlay of cruelty, sexuality and horror and the uncanny seem to have affected the strictly journalistic or investigative nature of Casement's outlook. By the end of his stay, he believed that the jungle had supernatural powers and possessed an uncanny magic of its own. This would give the jungle agency to take revenge on the torturers, consuming the whites and other outsiders who come into contact with it – a phenomenon more fully described in José Eustasio Rivera's novel, *The Vortex*.

As a fictional novel about the rubber boom, *The Vortex* takes place in the Putumayo region of Colombia and tells of the power of the jungle and nature's powerful resistance to the extractivist practice of rubber tapping. Like Casement, Rivera's characters begin to experience the increasingly uncanny agency of the jungle. One character who acts as a worker and guide named Silva describes how the mosquitoes impede the collection of rubber: "A cloud of mosquitoes rises into my face to take my blood while my hands are occupied, and a rising vapor blurs my vision. This is a death struggle. I torture the tree and the tree tortures me, until one of us succumbs" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 148). The novel's protagonist Arturo Cova, a city dweller who has come to make his fortune,

describes trying to resist the forest that begins to consume him with illness and madness: "Gradually I came to my senses. Deranged? Not very likely! The fever had left me alone for several weeks. There was nothing 'deranged' about my thinking, which remained sharp and clear… I perceived the tiniest details of my surroundings" (RIVERA, 2018, pp. 150-151,). Yet Cova continues to feel overwhelmed and out of control: "Walking along with my mind thus occupied, I began to see my calves sinking ever deeper in the leaf litter and the trees growing precipitously taller on either side of the trail, raising their massive arms into the green canopy" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 152). Cova conveys the disorienting feeling of Freud's "unheimlich" when he describes his head "becoming heavy" and he feels he is moving sideways. At this moment he says, "I panicked, afraid to be left alone, and began to run in random directions, howling with *terror*" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 152), as if he has gone completely mad.

At this moment, Silva advocates for a respect for the jungle and its uncanny power. He explains to Cova, "A tree that grows by itself on a plain, in a park, or beside a road will be benevolent toward us, as long as people don't cut it, torment it, and bleed its sap" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 152). He urges Cova to show respect for the jungle's power because it has enchanted or "betwitched" him, saying, "The trees are having fun with you, but they are not really a threat… Science cannot explain what happens to men's minds when they wander in the jungle, but I believe I know" (RIVERA 2018, p. 152). He argues that trees can become aggressive and perverse towards people and have a way of poisoning one's mind. This phenomenon "startles us, makes us tense, oppresses our spirit, and the dizzy orientation of the deep woods sweeps over us" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 152), as if the trees suddenly had taken on the powers of an army of witches.

In another passage, Cova describes the uncanny movements of the *tambocha* termites: "The leaf litter on the forest floor trembled continuously, the leaves seeming to boil… any creature unable to escape would be devoured to the skeleton, after screeching briefly, as though immersed in a bath of sulfuric acid" (RIVERA 2018, p. 165). He tells the story of one man, Venancio, who, although able to pull himself out of the mud where he had fallen, neglected to see that the termites had eaten his hand raw. The cycle of the jungle that absorbs all living things, does not distinguish between the animal and the human. As an urban dweller, Cova describes the power of the jungle to give and take away life, as a horror "unveiled before my eyes" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 153). Describing the actions of the tree-killer vine, the *matapolo,* and the *bachaquero* ants, he finds that decay in the forest smells like "the breath of both purification and procreation" (RIVERA 2018, p. 153), and proceeds to describe it like an orgy:

> Here, croaking toads in murky, foul-smelling backwaters. Here, poisonous epiphytes whose aphrodisiac attractions create a pile of dead bees on the ground beneath

> them. Here, a diversity of repugnant flowers that palpitate like sexual organs and exude an odious fragrance that intoxicates like a drug. (RIVERA, 2018, p. 153)

The jungle and its combination of sex and death is especially uncanny for the Western outsider. For Cova, he finds it truly haunting, such that he cannot sleep: "Here, in the night: unknown voices, phantasmagoric lights, funereal silences" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 154). The forest comes alive at night, when he hears predators devouring prey: "…the sound of jaws that eat hurriedly to avoid being eaten; the call of danger and alert; the agony of prey that did not escape; the echoing belch of the satiated predator" (RIVERA, 2018, p. 154). The surviving creatures rejoice at another day of life, including humans. According to Leslie Wylie, the descriptions of the telluric horror of the jungle are marked not only by revulsion but also by gratification on the part of the observer (2005, p. 110), In one scene when Cova sees two men sucked into the forest's vortex, he regards their death as a thing of perverse beauty.

Whereas Cova's party walks into the jungle and spends considerable time there, Marlow, the narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, tells the story from a more distant vantage point, aboard a boat. Cova and his party have nothing to separate them from the jungle and feel its uncanny power. In contrast, Marlow can turn his boat around and leave whenever he wishes. He is more like a flâneur of the jungle, and like a detached flaneur of a nineteenth-century European city, he stays aboard his boat where he is most comfortable. Joseph Conrad himself had spent twenty years navigating the seas between England and Africa, which is reflected in Marlow's perspective and knowledge of navigation. While Marlow is often concerned with finding a way out of the jungle, Cova commits himself to the jungle, as if to a living being. For Marlow, the jungle stands like a door with an invitation, and "the woods were unmoved, like a mask, heaved like the closed door of a prison" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 56). This solid image of the jungle contrasts with Rivera's swirling, living vortex.

In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad describes the jungle as surrounding Marlow, as if an "… utter savagery had closed around him – all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 10). Taking his boat up the Congo river, Marlow says that he feels like an imposter in the jungle. Could it be because he was a white man in a colonized state, or did he feel out of place as an urban human in a natural world? In either case, he experiences the natural world as uncanny. As he heads up the river in search of Kurtz, the infamous European man who had gone mad, Marlow describes the jungle as if he were in a dream: "I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word that would give me the clue to the faint *uneasiness* inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 30). He describes the river in more uncanny adjectives:

"the river seemed to beckon with a dishonoring flourish before the sunlit face of the land, a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 40). Marlow finally describes Kurtz as having been taken over by the jungle as a living entity, a mother that has turned him into progeny: "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 favorite" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 49). The jungle has become the Freudian mother that overwhelms the child, representing the uncanny fear that the jungle is more than just a place. It is a being capable of absorbing Western men who hear its call, annihilating their identity.

Later, Marlow deduces that there was something lacking in Kurtz, like unsatisfied lust, saying that:

> The wilderness had found him out early and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. (It had tempted him with the sinister suggestions of its loneliness.) It whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception til he took counsel with this great solitude – and the whisper which had proved irresistibly fascinating. (CONRAD, 1999, p. 57)

Next, Marlow begins to accept his own fate as the jungle begins to consume him as one of its victims. "It is strange how I accepted this unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 60). Lastly, just before dying, Kurtz, waiting for death, cries out the famous words – reflecting on his pride, power, and the terror he had experienced in the jungle – "The horror! The horror!" (CONRAD, 1999, p. 68). Marlow describes Kurtz as a remarkable man, who prided himself in his convictions and his willingness to take the dive into the unknown jungle. Marlow feels a commingling of desire and hate that attracted him to Kurtz (CONRAD, 1999, p. 69), again exploring the possibilities of forbidden desire associated with the jungle environment. In *Heart of Darkness*, the jungle goes beyond the human and to overwhelm conventional Western definitions of morality and identity.

The jungle is a place that threatens the political and ontological stability of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and Colombian masculinity. It overwhelms Western men accustomed to conquering lands they invade or explore. While Europeans exploited the jungle for neocolonial profit, the Colombians saw the jungle as its national territory and a source of wealth for nation building. For Latin American elites, the idea of exploiting both the land and its people for creating wealth was part of a long history of the struggle between civilization and barbarity. As Ángel Rama explains, the urban centers of lettered elites imposed "order" on the vast territories and

people of the hinterlands. However, the jungle becomes a place of obstruction for the colonizers. In contrast, for the *pueblos étnicos* of the region, the jungle is a familiar place, *heimlich* or home. In *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze*, Clive Gabay notes the traditional divide between whiteness/civilization and blackness/barbarity, yet notes that the colonized world could not be reduced to merely material or paternalistic impulses but rather a simultaneous series of deep anxieties concerning Western white vitality (GABAY, 2018, p. 61). As documented by Roger Casement, the embodied experience and the scars of the Huitotos are reflection of this colonial anxiety. The agency of the jungle as obstruction or destruction can be seen in the way that the jungle's vortex consumes Cova's entire party of explorers. Marlow, for as much as he attempts to separate himself from the Congo is observed by those who gaze back at him, as the horrors of the ivory trade in the Congo reinforce themes of whiteness and colonial anxiety. Reimagining these works with a focus on the sensorial, the bodies and minds experiencing the uncanny through the jungle capture the twin horrors of extractivism and colonialism. This study is a preliminary interpretation of these works informed by a modern understanding of psychology, masculinities, white fragility, and ecocriticism.

Casement, Cova, and Marlow offer us a narrative voice that gives readers a narrative of the uncanny to explain the haunting experience they suffer. As Westerners, they lack the words to convey what they feel and project their anxieties onto the jungle. As M. A. Somale argues, such narrators resort to the use of the "rhetorical metaphor" of the jungle, personifying its power (2017, p. 7). In her view, the jungle is an ideal scenario for Kurtz to reflect on his madness to discover that "the horror" is not the jungle but his greed. Cova uses the jungle as a metaphor for human consciousness and the unknown, while pondering its power to consume human ambition. In his experience of the jungle, Casement protests colonial exploitation in the jungle where it becomes entangled with desire. The uncanny power of the jungle often turns life into death, undermining the certainty of positivist Western thought through the uncanny power of the natural world.

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