Abstract – This paper focuses on *I fantasmi dell’Impero* by Marco Consentino, Domenico Dodaro and Luigi Panella (2016), a post-colonial rewriting of *Heart of Darkness* that centers on the Italian colonization of eastern Africa in the Fascist period. On the one hand, *I fantasmi dell’Impero* exposes the “heart of darkness” of the Fascist military effort in Ethiopia, fleshing out its period portrayal by means of a careful historical research. At the same time, however, it takes its cue from a specific historical episode to articulate a variation on the *Heart of Darkness* theme that goes along with a revision of the by now mythical figure of Mr. Kurtz. The autocratic behavior of Captain Gioacchino Corvo, who acts as both justice and executioner in the remote Bahar Dar region, does not result from a nihilistic awareness of the violence that attended the “civilizing mission”. It is, conversely, encouraged by a bureaucratic system that relieves imperial subjects from the burden of ethical responsibility. Informed by a post-totalitarian sensibility, *I fantasmi dell’Impero* explores the banality of the evil during Fascism. In doing so, it develops one of the suggestions of *Heart of Darkness*, itself an early diagnosis of the frame of mind that enabled “administrative massacres”.

**Keywords:** *Heart of Darkness*, Italian literature, fascism, colonialism, totalitarianism