

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

September 19. James, "The Beast in the Jungle," concluded.
Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

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heads up

Paper I due October 7

Topics distributed Monday.

commonplacing

Focus on the first half of “Melanctha” (Dover 91)

Write **one blog post**

with **two passages from Stein**

and **a paragraph of close analysis of the text that connects the two passages**

due Sunday at 5 p.m. (ungraded)

find assignment details at:

<http://20fic-f13.blogs.rutgers.edu/commonplace-analyze/>

review

“delayed specification of referents”

“delayed decoding” (Ian Watt, 1960, 1979)

At the same time the fireman, whom I could also see below me, sat down abruptly before his furnace and ducked his head. I was amazed. ... Sticks, little sticks, were flying about—thick: they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house.

Heart of Darkness, 149

review

“delayed specification of referents”

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Heart of Darkness, 149

(impression)

As this was his first impression of that, it made a kind of date.

“The Beast in the Jungle,” 464

unknowable sexuality

“It’s never too late.” She had, with her gliding step, diminished the distance between them, and she stood nearer to him, close to him, a minute, as if still full of the unspoken....She only kept him waiting, however; that is he only waited.

“Beast,” 475

unknowable sexuality

What if Marcher himself had other desires?

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

unknowable sexuality

The rest of the world of course thought him queer, but she, she only, knew how, and above all why, queer. (459)

unknowable sexuality

Marcher becomes...not the finally self-knowing man who is capable of heterosexual love, but the irredeemably self-ignorant man who embodies and enforces heterosexual compulsion.

Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*

no compensation

more or less a part of the establishment—almost a working, a remunerated part...It wasn't that she looked as if you could have given her shillings. (James, 446)

He had a screw loose for her, but she liked him in spite of it, and was practically, against the rest of the world, his kind, wise keeper, unremunerated, but fairly amused and, in the absence of other near ties, not disreputably occupied. (459)

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) [Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski]



Conrad in 1904



Wikimedia Commons—Britannica 1890

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1899 serialized magazine version

1899.]

The Heart of Darkness.

193

THE HEART OF DARKNESS.

BY JOSEPH CONRAD.

THE "Nellie," a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for us was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realise his work was not out

there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns — and even convictions. The Lawyer — the best of old fellows — had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzenmast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The Director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity that had a still and exquisite brilliance. The water

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1902 novella version in *Youth*

HEART OF DARKNESS.

I.

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Marlow's desire

“I like to think my summing-up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last.” (179)

““Love him.”” (184)

Discussion

“‘Intimacy grows quickly out there,’ I said. ‘I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.’” (183)

What is the nature of the “intimacy” Marlow claims with Kurtz? Why does Marlow’s tale lay such stress on the connection he feels with him? Find an example or two from the text to support your case.

imperialism / the novel

some reading principles

Empire is a cultural as well as political-economic formation

Dominators' representations understand themselves as impartial but are deeply self-serving

Basic concepts of agency, history, morality are suspended in relation to the colonized Other

imperialism / the novel

1880–1900 Europeans lay claim to nearly all African territory (“scramble for Africa”)

“By this time it was not a blank space any more” (108)



imperialism / the novel

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“civilizing mission”

To open to civilization the only part of our globe where it has yet to penetrate, to pierce the darkness which envelops whole populations, it is a crusade worthy of this century of progress.

King Leopold II of Belgium, 1872

Personal sovereign of Congo Free State, 1885–1908

Atrocities denounced by George Washington Williams (1890), Roger Casement (1904)

“civilizing mission”

“A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path...I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain...

“They were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation... Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts...they sickened.”

116–118

race

It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks—these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality...

race

Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as “the other world,” the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.

It is clearly not part of Conrad’s purpose to confer language on the “rudimentary souls” of Africa. In place of speech they made “a violent babble of uncouth sounds.”

Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” (1975, 1987)

race

Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? ...The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world.

Achebe, "An Image of Africa"

Conrad's ambivalence

The almost oppressive force of Marlow's narrative leaves us with a quite accurate sense that there is no way out of the sovereign historical force of imperialism...

Conrad's tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism is essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that "natives" could lead lives free from European domination.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 24, 30

discussion

Discuss Achebe's indictment of Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*. What evidence supports it? What evidence complicates it?

Contrast Achebe's position on the novel with Said's. Develop an argument for one over the other (or a third position).

next time

wrapping up Conrad

read “Melanctha”: as much as you can.
(focus on the 1st half)

blog assignment