The Modern English Novel

Lecture 1

Modernism in literature

An overwiew of early 20th century

literary trends

Definition

Modernism is a literary and cultural international movement which flourished in the first decades of the 20th century. Modernism is not a term to which a single meaning can be ascribed. It may be applied both to the content and to the form of a work, or to either in isolation. It reflects a sense of cultural crisis which was both exciting and disquieting, in that it opened up a whole new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Modernism is marked by experimentation, particularly manipulation of form, and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute.

A few dates

- 1909

First "Manifesto" of Italian Futurism

- 1910

Death of Edward VII

Post-impressionist exhibition in London

- 1913

Russian Cubo-futurism

English Verticism

- 1916-20

Dada

1912-17

Imagism

Tradition and individual Talent **by TS Eliot**

- 1922

- T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

- J. Joyce's *Ulysses*

- Death of M.Proust

Modernism as a movement

Modernism as a movement can be recognized not only

in literature but also in

- The sciences

- Philosophy

- Psychology

- Anthropology

- Painting

- Music

- Sculpture

- Architecture

General Features

- Modernism was built on a sense of lost community and civilization

and embodied a series of contradictions and paradoxes, embraced

multiple features of modern sensibility

- Revolution and conservatism

- Loss of a sense of tradition

- lamented in an extreme form of reactionary conservatism celebrated as a means of liberation from the past

- Increasing dominance of technology

- condemned vehemently embraced as the flagship of progress

Consequences

- Productive insecurity originated
- Aesthetics of experimentation
- Fragmentation
- Ambiguity
- Nihilism
- Variety of theories
- Diversity of practices

Thematic features

- Intentional distortion of shapes
- Focus on form rather than meaning
- Breaking down of limitation of space and time
- Breakdown of social norms and cultural values
- Dislocation of meaning and sense from its normal context
- Valorisation of the despairing individual in the face of an unmanageable future
- Disillusionment
- Rejection of history and the substitution of a mythical past
- Need to reflect the complexity of modern urban life
- Importance of the unconscious mind
- Interest in the primitive and non-western cultures
- Impossibility of an absolute interpretation of reality
- Overwhelming technological changes

Theoretical Background

Marx and Darwin had unsettled men from their secure

place at the centre of the human universe. Their theories

threatened humanist self-confidence and caused a feeling of

ideological uncertainty

Marx had revealed men's dependence on laws and structures outside their control and - sometimes beyond their knowledge. Historical and material determinism.

- Darwin in his conception of evolution and heredity had situated humanity as the latest product of natural selection

Influential thinkers

Physicist Einstein on R*elativit*y (1905)

Physicist Planck on *Quantum Theory* (1900)

Philosopher Nietzsche on the *Will of Power*

Philosopher Bergson on the *Concept of Time*

Psychologist William James on *Emotions* and *Inner Time*

Psychologist Freud on the *Unconscious* (*The Interpretation*

***of Dreams,* 1900)**

Psychologist Jung on *Collective Unconscious*

Linguist De Saussure on *Language*

Anthropologist Frazer on *Primitive Cultures*

Max Plank (1858-1947)

Considered the founder of quantum

theory, and one of the most important physicists of the twentieth century, he discovered Quantum mechanics

- the study of the relationship between quanta and elementary particles

- regarded as the most fundamental framework we have for understanding and describing nature

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

The *Theory of General Relativity*

- A metric theory of gravitation
- Einstein's equations link the geometry of a four-dimensional space-time with the energy-momentum contained in that space-time
- Phenomena ascribed to the action of the force of gravity in classical mechanics, correspond to inertial motion within a curved geometry of spacetime
- The curvature is caused by the energy-momentum of matter
- Space-time tells matter how to move
- Matter tells space-time how to curve.

William James (1842-1910)

Pioneering American psychologist and philosopher

- was first to introduce the term stream of consciousness to denote the continuous flow of thoughts, feelings and impressions that makes up our inner lives

Theory of emotions

- emotions feel different from other states of mind
- they have bodily responses that give rise to internal sensations
- different emotions feel different from one another because they are accompanied by different bodily responses and sensations

Sigmund Freud (1856-1938)

Austrian psychologist and psychotherapist

- Discovered a new method to investigate

the mind through analysis of dreams and free associations

- Known for his theories of the unconscious mind and the defense

mechanism of repression

- **Renowned for his redefinition of sexual desire as the primary motivational energy of human life directed toward a wide variety of objects**

- **Famous for his therapeutic techniques, including theory of transference in the therapeutic relationship value of dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires**

Carl G. Jung (1875-1961)

Swiss psychiatrist, influential thinker and the founder of analytical psychology

- **He emphasized understanding the psyche through exploring dreams, art mythology, world religion and philosophy**

- **Developed the concept of collective unconscious, a sort of cultural memory containing myths and beliefs of the human race which work at a symbolical level**

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

German philologist and philosopher. His key ideas include

- **Tragedy as an affirmation of life**

- **Eternal recurrence**

- **Reversal of Platonism**

- **Repudiation of Christianity**

- **Will to power (as the motivation that underlies all human behavior)**

Henri Bergson (1858-1941)

French philosopher, influential in the first half of the 20th century

developed

- the theory of duration

- time is mobile and incomplete

- for the individual, time speeds up or slows down

- to explore the real time we need to explore the inner life of man

- duration is neither a unity nor a multiplicity

- duration is ineffable

- it can only be shown indirectly through images

- images can never reveal a complete picture of Duration

- duration can only be grasped through intuition and imagination

James Frazer (1834-1841)

Scottish social anthropologist

influential in the early stages of the modern

studies of mythology and comparative

Religion. His most famous work, *The Golden Bough*

(1890), documents similar magical and religious beliefs

across the globe. He maintained that human belief

progressed through three stages:

- primitive magic

- religion

- science

Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913)

Swiss linguist

widely considered as the 'father' of 20th-century linguistics. Main work *Course in General Linguistics.* Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements

- linguistic sign

- signifier

- signified

- referent

Painting

Fauvism – Matisse

Supremacy of colour over form

Interest in the primitive and the magical

Cubism – Picasso, Braque

Fragmentation of objects into abstract geometric forms

Abstract paintng – Kandinsky

Attention to line, colour, shape as subjects of painting

Vorticism – Wyndham Lewis

Incorporating the idea of motion and change

Braque

Kandinsky

Music

Stravinsky, Schoenberg

- **Dissonance/distorted music effects**
- **Rejection of rules of harmony and composition**
- **Serial system of composition**

Formal features of poetry

- **Open form**
- **Use of free verse**
- **Juxtaposition of ideas rather than consequential exposition**
- **Intertextuality**
- **Use of allusions and multiple association of words**
- **Borrowings from other cultures and languages**
- **Unconventional use of metaphor**
- **Importance given to sound to convey "the music of ideas"**

Modernist novelists

M. Proust	V. Woolf
F. Kafka	D.H. Lawrence
R. Musil	J. Conrad
T. Mann	J, Joyce
I. Svevo	E.M. Forster
L. Pirandello	E. Hemingway
B. Pasternak	W. Faulkner
M. Bulgakov	K.Mansfield

Formal features of narrative

- **Experimental nature**
- **Lack of traditional chronological narrative (discontinuous narrative)**
- **Break of narrative frames (fragmentation)**
- **Moving from one level of narrative to another**
- **A number of different narrators (multiple narrative points of view)**
- **Self-reflexive about the act of writing and the nature of literature (meta-narrative)**
- **Use of interior monologue technique**
- **Use of the stream of consciousness technique**
- **Focus on a character's consciousness and subconscious**

Stream of consciousness

- **Aims to provide a textual equivalent to the stream of a fictional character's consciousness**
- **Creates the impression that the reader is eavesdropping on the flow of conscious experience in the character's mind**
- **Comes in a variety of stylistic forms**
- ***Narrated stream of consciousness* often composed of different sentence types including psycho-narration and free indirect style**

- characterized by associative (and at times dissociative) leaps in syntax and punctuation

Interior monologue

- A particular kind of *stream of consciousness* writing

- Also called quoted stream of consciousness, presents characters' thought streams exclusively in the form of silent inner speech, as a stream of verbalised thoughts

- Represents characters speaking silently to themselves and quotes their inner speech, often without speech marks

- Is presented in the first person and in the present tense and employs deictic words

- Also attempts to mimic the unstructured free flow of thought

- Can be found in the context of third-person narration and dialogue

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Lecture 2

The Modernist English Novel

What kind of novel was 'Modernist'? The question is less easy to answer than is the case with Modernist poetry. As a literary form, the novel is very much younger than poetry, in its modern European form dating from only the beginning of the eighteenth century. Despite the impressive achievements of many European writers in the next century and a half, in the mid-nineteenth century the novel still lacked the cultural esteem traditionally granted to poetry. Extraordinary though it may seem today when the novel has dominated literary practice for so long, Matthew Arnold's seminal *Essays in Criticism* (1865) completely ignored the novel as a distinct literary form, drawing only on poetry as the appropriate subject for worthwhile literary culture. However, from about 1870 some novelists, notably Gustave Flaubert and Henry James, began to formulate ideas about 'the art of the novel', discussing them in essays and reviews, and illustrating them in their own fiction. The emergence of the 'Modernist' novel is not easily distinguished from this initial stage of debate about the intrinsic features of the novel as distinct from poetry and drama.

Summarising Flaubert's aims for the novel, Jonathan Culler (1974, pp. 14–16) lists three main issues:

1 that 'content' was less important than 'style';

2 that a novel should confront the reader as 'an aesthetic object rather than a communicative act';

3 that a novel should contain no identifiable authorial point of view or opinion about its subject, its characters and events: their interpretation was entirely a matter for the reader to work out.

James, though more directly concerned than Flaubert with moral issues, proposed comparable goals. Novels should aim at aesthetic unity. Thus the author, as an overt 'voice' in the novel, should not appear: readers would meet only the various points of view – the attitudes and the judgements – of the characters, and primarily through the 'central intelligence' of one main character; in furthering this aim, episodes should be *presented* in terms of 'scenes', rather than merely narrated. Such ideas and practices were extensively adopted by Modernist novelists.

What did this mean in practice? Flaubert, whom in 1902 James was to call 'the novelist's novelist' (quoted in Gard, 1987, p. 402), was celebrated for agonising over *le mot juste*, sometimes taking a day to compose a single satisfactory sentence. This concern for 'style' was widely shared by Modernist novelists: James himself, Conrad, Joyce,

Woolf and many others. By the term 'style', I do not at all mean what might be dismissively called 'fancy writing', verbal flourishing for its own sake. On the contrary: Flaubert's severe discipline was aimed at finding the exactly right word, and right set of words, for the given situation, location, social milieu, for description of the characters, and for what the characters said to each other (and to themselves), whether actually or in thought.

Such an aim required of novelists a command of language in one respect resembling that of playwrights, and in another that of poets. Characters had to be given their own 'voices', forms of particular speech that expressed their individuality within the wide range of situations the story involved them in. At the same time, scene setting and description had to become more economical, more precise, and more complexly suggestive of appropriate moods. Such aims were not absolutely new – as any familiarity with (to choose at random) Austen's or Dickens's novels illustrates – but Modernist novelists pursued them with special intensity and dedication. For these reasons, the language of Modernist narrative came to matter as much as, perhaps more than, the narrative itself. Recalling the distinction between 'story' and 'discourse' discussed in Block 1, Section 1, we should note that the contribution to 'discourse' of the novel's *language* became the novelist's overriding concern. To put the point another way, while prose continues to be the Modernist novel's medium, it is a prose that deliberately incorporates features more usually associated with poetry, in the precision and evocative power of its imagery, and in the deployment of a more or less explicit symbolism, both as carrier of the novel's deeper significance and one source of its aesthetic unity. Without claiming a direct influence of Imagism and Symbolism upon Modernist novelists, we can say that their increasing attention to language did encourage a varied and complex use of imagery and symbolism, and that in this respect the influence of Modernism on poetry and novels was not dissimilar.

To illustrate this, here is a paragraph from your set text, *Mrs Dalloway.* Peter Walsh is walking from Regent's Park, crossing Marylebone Road, just by Regent's Park Tube Station:

A sound interrupted him; a frail quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end, running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning into

ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo –

the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth; which issued, just opposite Regent's Park Tube Station, from a tall quivering shape, like a funnel, like a rusty pump, like a wind-beaten tree for ever barren of leaves which lets the wind run up and down its branches singing

ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo,

and rocks and creaks and moans in the eternal breeze ...

As the ancient song bubbled up opposite Regent's Park Tube Station, still the earth seemed green and flowery; still, though it issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses, still the old bubbling burbling song, soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston, fertilising, leaving a damp stain.

(*Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 90–1)

What Peter Walsh hears is a street singer, an old woman singing a love song which, to her, invokes a memory of her lover many, many years ago. But these paragraphs first present her as without human form ('like a funnel, like a rusty pump, like a wind-beaten tree'), as an impersonal conduit for the song, which, hardly a song at all, is seen as a spring of water, bubbling up from a 'mere hole in the earth'. I will leave you to

The passage also illustrates the self-effacing role of the narrator in Modernist novels. It is clearly the narrator (and not Peter Walsh) who tells us about the street singer; yet we do not learn what to think about her, why she is introduced at this particular point in the novel, or her significance for its other episodes. Similarly, in the presentation of the whole novel, the narrator tells us where the characters are, what they look like, what time of day it is, what they are doing, what they say, think and feel about each other. But beyond that, as readers, we are on our own, in the manner recommended by Flaubert and James, a kind of narration you have already met in Woolf's 'Kew Gardens'. We can also connect this view of the narrator's role with the Modernist rejection of the overt moralising and philosophising characteristic of the narrators of many Victorian novels, Dickens and George Eliot in particular. In this respect, Modernist novelists were in sympathy with key points in Yeats's account of Symbolist poetry, outlined above.

Lastly, there was Flaubert's insistence, as summed up in Culler's sentence, that a novel should be 'an aesthetic object rather than a communicative act', a view for which (though with a good deal of qualification) James also argued. A defining feature of a good novel had to be aesthetic *unity*, in marked contrast with 'the novel as largely practised in English' which, he complained in *The Art of the Novel*, 'is the perfect paradise of the loose end' (1935, p. 114). This is more than a request for tidiness of construction. Rather, it is a logical application of Flaubert's preoccupation with *le mot juste* to the composition and arrangement of whole paragraphs and chapters. Getting rid of 'loose ends' meant that no episode, no chapter, no dialogue, no description, should appear in the novel merely for local effect, and so without relevance to the whole design. This demand for a unifying design had a considerable impact on narrative structure, about which Modernist novelists are much more self-conscious than their Victorian predecessors, especially about how narratives conclude. Instead of the burgeoning complex of plots and sub-plots typical of Victorian novels, Modernist narrative is usually minimal; and, except as an irreducible structuring device, how the narrative ends matters less because it avoids any definite resolution of the various conflicts the novel has explored. The preferred Modernist conclusion is 'open': the novel's conflicts are revealed but not resolved. *Mrs Dalloway* is a case in point, as you will discover. Individual episodes in the novel take their meaning more from the manner, and at the moment of their presentation, than from some overarching pattern whose 'key' is only provided by the conclusion.

Underlying such resistance to narrative closure is an implicit attitude towards the dimension of time. In an influential discussion of narrative time, Frank Kermode distinguishes two ways of thinking about it by means of Greek terms, *chronos* and *kairos* (1967, pp. 46–8). *Chronos* is mere endless successiveness without direction or purpose; *kairos* means that given points of time are 'filled with significance, charged with a

meaning derived from [their] relation to the end'. If you think of time as directed towards some end and purpose, then the stages of that progress will be meaningful in relation to that end. To take familiar illustrations – 'ten more shopping days to Christmas', or 'my daughter's exams three months hence' – such passages of time would yield various moments of *kairos*. But if you think of time as *chronos*, then no individual episode can take its meaning from its relation to a conclusion or end, because there is none. The meaning of individual moments can only inhere in those moments, which become occasions of 'revelation', of a precious and unique insight. For Modernist novelists, time is rarely conceived as progressing stage by significant stage towards some finally meaningful end. Time is rather *chronos*, mere successiveness. Such an attitude clearly militates against a narrative structure in which ends and conclusions command the flow and direction of the novel. Again, *Mrs Dalloway* will illustrate this.

Conclusion

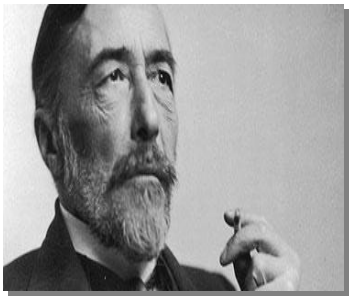
In this section we have been dealing with generalities, certain dominant features of Modernist poetry and novels. In the sections that now follow, particularly those on your set texts (Woolf, Eliot, Yeats), such features will be illustrated in more detail. After you have become familiar with these texts, you should find it useful to return to this section and consider again the general character of Imagism and Symbolism, and of their effect on Modernist writing.

Lecture 3

The Modern English Novel

The Modern Age

Joseph Conrad



Joseph Conrad - Life

Nationality

Careers

Theme of Double

Born in Poland (1857)

Patriotic family

Exile in Russia

Marseilles in 1874 on French ships

1878 on English ship to Far East

1886 Master Mariner + British Subject

1890 Africa -> Congo Diary

Sickness -> no more sea -> writing

1924 death

Joseph Conrad - Works

The Nigger of the Narcissus - 1897

Youth – 1898

Lord Jim - 1900

Heart of Darkness – 1902

Nostromo – 1904

The Secret Agent – 1907

Under Western Eyes – 1911

The Shadow Line - 1917

The Rescue – 1920

The Rover - 1923

- The Nigger of the Narcissus - 1897

- Youth – 1898

- Lord Jim - 1900

- Heart of Darkness – 1902

- Nostromo – 1904

- The Secret Agent – 1907

- Under Western Eyes – 1911

- The Shadow Line - 1917

- The Rescue – 1920

- The Rover – 1923

Conrad – Task Setting Style

Writer's Task

No Amusing - No Teaching

Recording the complexity of life

Exploring the meaning of human condition

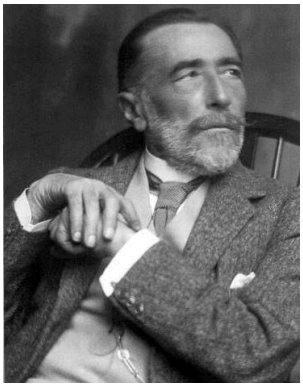
Setting

Sea and Exotic latitudes (River/Jungle) -> Adventure stories

Places well known -> to isolate characters -> inner conflicts

Ship as microcosm

Style



Oblique

Extreme situations -> violence misery

Heroes

solitary figures, no past, uncertain future

from outside -> mind of others - actions

Conrad – Narrative Technique

Time Shifts -> illusion of life

First-person narration

Invisible narrator

Journals

Letters

Same narrator (Marlow) or more than one

Several points of view -> no constraints of omniscent narrator -> reader free to decide and relativism of moral values

Conrad – Language

Polish

French

English -> ideal expression for complexity of life

Idiomatic dialogue

question marks

exclamation marks

dashes

Interjections

Variety of adjectives

Complex structures

Characters of Heart of darkness

Marlow

The protagonist of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow is philosophical, independent-minded, and generally skeptical of those around him. He is also a master storyteller, eloquent and able to draw his listeners into his tale. Although Marlow shares many of his fellow Europeans' prejudices, he has seen enough of the world and has encountered enough debased white men to make him skeptical of imperialism.

Kurtz

The chief of the Inner Station and the object of Marlow's quest. Among Kurtz's many talents are his charisma and his ability to lead men. Kurtz is a man who understands the power of words, and his writings are marked by an eloquence that obscures their horrifying message. Although he remains an enigma even to Marlow, Kurtz clearly exerts a powerful influence on the people in his life.

His downfall seems to be a result of his willingness to ignore the hypocritical rules that govern European colonial conduct: Kurtz has "kicked himself loose of the earth" by fraternizing excessively with the natives and not keeping up appearances. Kurtz has become wildly successful but he has also indulged his own evil desires and alienated himself from his fellow white men.

General manager

The chief agent of the Company's African territory and manager of the Central Station. The General manager owes his success to a hardy constitution that allows him to outlive all his competitors. He is average in appearance and unremarkable in abilities, but he possesses a strange capacity to produce uneasiness in those around him, which allows him to exert his control.

Pilgrims

The bumbling, greedy agents of the Central Station. They carry long wooden staves, reminding Marlow of traditional religious travelers. They all want to be appointed to a station so that they can trade for ivory and earn a commission, but none of them actually takes any effective steps toward achieving this goal. They are obsessed with keeping up a veneer of civilization and proper conduct, and are motivated entirely by self-interest. They hate the natives and treat them like animals.

Cannibals

Natives hired as the crew of the steamer. They are a surprisingly reasonable and well-tempered bunch. Marlow respects their restraint and calm acceptance of adversity. The leader of the group, in particular, seems to be intelligent and capable of ironic reflection upon his situation.

Russian trader : A Russian sailor who has gone into the African interior as the trading representative of a Dutch company. He is boyish in appearance and temperament, and seems to exist wholly on the glamour of youth and the audacity of adventurousness. He is a devoted disciple of Kurtz's.

Kurtz's African mistress : A fiercely beautiful woman loaded with jewelry who appears on the shore when Marlow's steamer arrives at and leaves the Inner Station. She seems to exert an undue influence over both Kurtz and the natives around the station, and the Russian trader points her out as someone to fear. Like Kurtz, she is an enigma: she never speaks to Marlow, and he never learns anything more about her.

Kurtz's Intended : Kurtz's naïve and long-suffering fiancée, whom Marlow goes to visit after Kurtz's death. Her unshakable certainty about Kurtz's love for her reinforces Marlow's belief that women live in a dream world, well insulated from reality.

Heart of darkness - Key Facts

full title · *Heart of Darkness*

author · Joseph Conrad

type of work · Novella (between a novel and a short story in length and scope)

genre · Symbolism, colonial literature, adventure tale, frame story, almost a romance in its insistence on heroism and the supernatural and its preference for the symbolic over the realistic

language · English

time and place written · England, 1898–1899; inspired by Conrad's journey to the Congo in 1890

date of first publication · Serialized in *Blackwood's* magazine in 1899; published in 1902 in the volume *Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories*

publisher · J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

Heart of darkness

narrator · There are two narrators: an anonymous passenger on a pleasure ship, who listens to Marlow's story, and Marlow himself, a middle-aged ship's captain.

point of view · The first narrator speaks in the first-person plural, on behalf of four

other passengers who listen to Marlow's tale. Marlow narrates his story in the first person, describing only what he witnessed and experienced, and providing his own commentary on the story.

tone ·Ambivalent: Marlow is disgusted at the brutality of the Company and horrified by Kurtz's degeneration, but he claims that any thinking man would be tempted into similar behavior.

tense ·Past

setting (time) ·Latter part of the nineteenth century, probably sometime between 1876 and 1892

setting (place) ·Opens on the Thames River outside London, where Marlow is telling the story that makes up *Heart of Darkness.* Events of the story take place in Brussels, at the Company's offices, and in the Congo, then a Belgian territory.

protagonist ·Marlow

Major conflict ·Both Marlow and Kurtz confront a conflict between their images of themselves as "civilized" Europeans and the temptation to abandon morality completely once they leave the context of European society.

rising action ·The brutality Marlow witnesses in the Company's employees, the rumors he hears that Kurtz is a remarkable and humane man, and the numerous examples of Europeans breaking down mentally or physically in the environment of Africa.

falling action ·Marlow's acceptance of responsibility for Kurtz's legacy, Marlow's encounters with Company officials and Kurtz's family and friends, Marlow's visit to Kurtz's Intended

themes ·The hypocrisy of imperialism, madness as a result of imperialism, the absurdity of evil

motifs ·Darkness (very seldom opposed by light), interiors vs. surfaces (kernel/shell, coast/inland, station/forest, etc.), ironic understatement, hyperbolic language, inability to find words to describe situation adequately, images of ridiculous waste, upriver versus downriver/toward and away from Kurtz/away from and back toward civilization (quest or journey structure)

symbols · Rivers, fog, women (Kurtz's Intended, his African mistress), French warship shelling forested coast, grove of death, severed heads on fence posts, Kurtz's "Report," dead helmsman, maps, "whited sepulchre" of Brussels, knitting women in Company offices, man trying to fill bucket with hole in it

foreshadowing · Permeates every moment of the narrative—mostly operates on

the level of imagery, which is consistently dark, gloomy, and threatening

Summary

At sundown, a pleasure ship called the *Nellie* lies anchored at the mouth of the Thames, waiting for the tide to go out. Five men relax on the deck of the ship: the Director of Companies, who is also the captain and host, the Lawyer, the Accountant, Marlow, and the unnamed Narrator. The five men, old friends held together by "the bond of the sea," are restless yet meditative, as if waiting for

something to happen. As darkness begins to fall, and the scene becomes "less brilliant but more profound," the men recall the great men and ships that have set forth from the Thames on voyages of trade and exploration, frequently never to return. Suddenly Marlow remarks that this very spot was once "one of the dark places of the earth." He notes that when the Romans first came to England, it was a great, savage wilderness to them. He imagines what it must have been like for a young Roman captain or soldier to come to a place so far from home and lacking in comforts.

This train of thought reminds Marlow of his sole experience as a "fresh-water sailor," when as a young man he captained a steamship going up the Congo River. He recounts that he first got the idea when, after returning from a six-year voyage through Asia, he came across a map of Africa in a London shop window, which reinvigorated his childhood fantasies about the "blank spaces" on the map.

Marlow recounts how he obtained a job with the Belgian "Company" that trades on the Congo River (the Congo was then a Belgian territory) through the influence of an aunt who had friends in the Company's administration. The Company was eager to send Marlow to Africa, because one of the Company's steamer captains had recently been killed in a scuffle with the natives.

Analysis

Marlow's story of a voyage up the Congo River that he took as a young man is the main narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's narrative is framed by another narrative, in which one of the listeners to Marlow's story explains the circumstances in which Marlow tells it. The narrator who begins *Heart of Darkness* is unnamed, as are the other three listeners, who are identified only by their professional occupations. Moreover, the narrator usually speaks in the first-person plural, describing what all four of Marlow's listeners think and feel.

The unanimity and anonymity of Marlow's listeners combine to create the impression that they represent conventional perspectives and values of the British establishment.

For the narrator and his fellow travelers, the Thames conjures up images of famous British explorers who have set out from that river on glorious voyages. The narrator recounts the achievements of these explorers in a celebratory tone, calling them "knight-errants" of the sea, implying that such voyages served a sacred, higher purpose. The narrator's attitude is that these men promoted the glory of Great Britain, expanded knowledge of the globe, and contributed to the civilization and enlightenment of the rest of the planet.

At the time *Heart of Darkness* was written, the British Empire was at its peak, and Britain controlled colonies and dependencies all over the planet. The popular saying that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" was literally true. The main topic of *Heart of Darkness* is imperialism, a nation's policy of

exerting influence over other areas through military, political, and economic coercion. The narrator expresses the mainstream belief that imperialism is a glorious and worthy enterprise. Indeed, in Conrad's time, "empire" was one of the central values of British subjects, the fundamental term through which Britain defined its identity and sense of purpose.

From the moment Marlow opens his mouth, he sets himself apart from his fellow passengers by conjuring up a past in which Britain was not the heart of civilization but the savage "end of the world." Likewise, the Thames was not the source of glorious journeys outward but the ominous beginning of a journey inward, into the heart of the wilderness. This is typical of Marlow as a storyteller: he narrates in an ironic tone, giving the impression that his audience's assumptions are wrong, but not presenting a clear alternative to those assumptions. Throughout his story, distinctions such as inward and outward, civilized and savage, dark and light, are called into question. But the irony of

Marlow's story is not as pronounced as in a satire, and Marlow's and Conrad's

attitudes regarding imperialism are never entirely clear.

From the way Marlow tells his story, it is clear that he is extremely critical of imperialism, but his reasons apparently have less to do with what imperialism does to colonized peoples than with what it does to Europeans. Marlow suggests, in the first place, that participation in imperial enterprises degrades Europeans by removing them from the "civilizing" context of European society, while simultaneously tempting them into violent behavior because of the hostility and lawlessness of the environment. Moreover, Marlow suggests that the mission of "civilizing" and "enlightening" native peoples is misguided, not because he believes that they have a viable civilization and culture already, but because they are so savage that the project is overwhelming and hopeless. Marlow expresses horror when he witnesses the violent maltreatment of the natives, and he argues that a kinship exists between black Africans and

and Europeans, but in the same breath he states that this kinship is "ugly" and horrifying, and that the kinship is extremely distant. Nevertheless, it is not a simple matter to evaluate whether Marlow's attitudes are conservative or progressive, racist or "enlightened."

In the first place, one would have to decide in relation to *whom* Marlow was conservative or progressive. Clearly, Marlow's story is shaped by the audience to whom he tells it. The anonymous narrator states that Marlow is unconventional in his ideas, and his listeners' derisive grunts and murmurs suggest that they are less inclined to question colonialism or to view Africans as human beings than he is. His criticisms of colonialism, both implicit and explicit, are pitched to an audience that is far more sympathetic toward the colonial enterprise than any twenty-first-century reader could be. The framing narrative puts a certain amount of distance between Marlow's narrative and Conrad himself.

This framework suggests that the reader should regard Marlow ironically, but there

are few cues within the text to suggest an alternative to Marlow's point of view.

Lecture 4

The Modern English Novel :

Heart of Darkness

Beginning through Marlow's being hired as a steamboat captain - summery

At sundown, a pleasure ship called the *Nellie* lies anchored at the mouth of the Thames, waiting for the tide to go out. Five men relax on the deck of the ship: the Director of Companies, who is also the captain and host, the Lawyer, the Accountant, Marlow, and the unnamed Narrator. The five men, old friends held together by "the bond of the sea," are restless yet meditative, as if waiting for something to happen. As darkness begins to fall, and the scene becomes "less brilliant but more profound," the men recall the great men and ships that have set forth from the Thames on voyages of trade and exploration, frequently never to return. Suddenly Marlow remarks that this very spot was once "one of the dark places of the earth." He notes that when the Romans first came to England, it was a great, savage wilderness to them. He imagines what it must have been like for a young Roman captain or soldier to come to a place so far from home and lacking in comforts.

This train of thought reminds Marlow of his sole experience as a "fresh-water sailor," when as a young man he captained a steamship going up the Congo River. He recounts that he first got the

idea when, after returning from a six-year voyage through Asia, he came across a map of Africa in a London shop window, which reinvigorated his childhood

Heart of Darkness

fantasies about the "blank spaces" on the map.

Marlow recounts how he obtained a job with the Belgian "Company" that trades on the Congo River (the Congo was then a Belgian territory) through the influence of an aunt who had friends in the Company's administration. The Company was eager to send Marlow to Africa, because one of the Company's steamer captains had recently been killed in a scuffle with the natives.

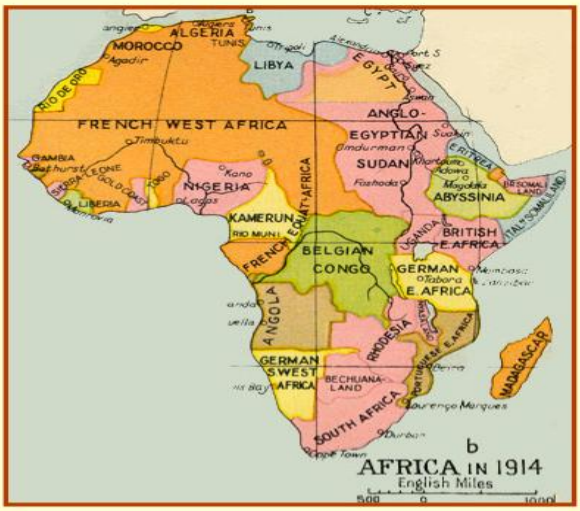
Analysis :

Marlow's story of a voyage up the Congo River that he took as a young man is the main narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's narrative is framed by another narrative, in which one of the listeners to Marlow's story explains the circumstances in which Marlow tells it. The narrator who begins *Heart of Darkness* is unnamed, as are the other three listeners, who are identified only by their professional occupations. Moreover, the narrator usually speaks in the first-person plural, describing what all four of Marlow's listeners think and feel.

This map shows Africa in 1914 and shows how much land the major nations had taken over.

There is so much detail that it is a little difficult to see exactly what has happened.

To get a better idea of how much of Africa was controlled by each European power, click on any of the links below.



BRITAIN FRANCE GERMANY ITALY BELGIUM NEXT PAGE

British Colonies

Britain had managed to get some of the most valuable land in Africa.

The most important gain was Egypt because of the Suez Canal.

This provided a much quicker and safer route to India – the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire.

French Colonies

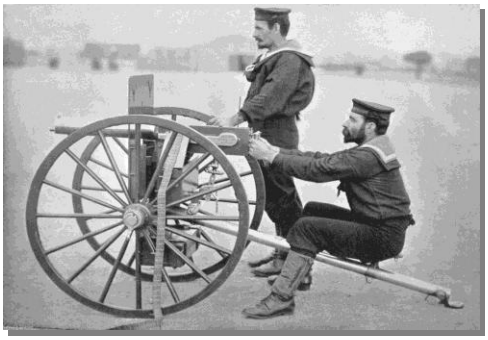
France had also built up a large colonial empire, mostly in the north west of Africa.

This had caused problems and there had been serious arguments over colonies such as Morocco and Tunis.

Arguments over colonies caused bad feeling between Britain and France.

Whatever happens we have got
The Maxim gun, and they have not.

Hilaire Belloc



German Colonies

Germany did not enter the race for colonies until very late and, as a result, much of the land gained was not very valuable.

Despite this, Kaiser William II was determined that Germany should have a major empire.

Belgian Colonies

Even tiny Belgium had an African colony – the Belgian Congo.

This was one of the reasons that Kaiser William II of Germany decided that his country must also have colonies.

Heart of Darkness

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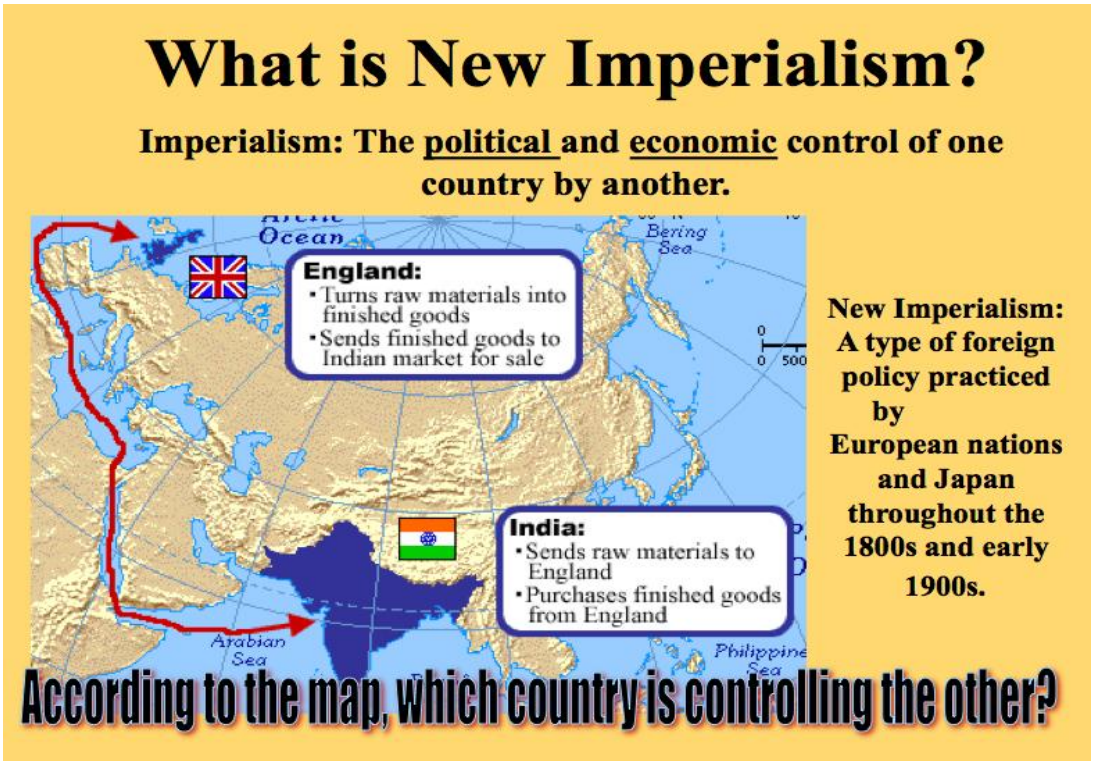
Marlow's visit to the Company Headquarters through his parting with his aunt - summery

After he hears that he has gotten the job, Marlow travels across the English Channel to a city that reminds him of a "whited sepulchre" (probably Brussels) to sign his employment contract at the Company's office. First, however, he digresses to tell the story of his predecessor with the Company, Fresleven. Much later, after the events Marlow is about to recount, Marlow was sent to recover Fresleven's bones, which he found lying in the center of a deserted African village. Despite his reputation as mild mannered, Fresleven was killed in a scuffle over some hens: after striking the village chief, he was stabbed by the chief's son. He was left there to die, and the superstitious natives immediately abandoned the village. Marlow notes that he never did find out what became of the hens.

Arriving at the Company's offices, Marlow finds two sinister women there knitting black wool, one of whom admits him to a waiting room, where he looks at a map of Africa color-coded by colonial powers. A secretary takes him into the inner office for a cursory meeting with the head of the Company. Marlow signs his contract, and the secretary takes him off to be checked over by a doctor. The doctor takes measurements of his skull,

remarking that he unfortunately doesn't get to see those men who make it back from Africa. More important, the doctor tells Marlow, "the changes take place inside." The doctor is interested in learning anything that may give Belgians an advantage in colonial situations.

With all formalities completed, Marlow stops off to say goodbye to his aunt, who expresses her hope that he will aid in the civilization of savages during his service to the Company, "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways." Well aware that the Company operates for profit and not for the good of humanity, and bothered by his aunt's naïveté, Marlow takes his leave of her. Before boarding the French steamer that is to take him to Africa, Marlow has a brief but strange feeling about his journey: the feeling that he is setting off for the center of the earth.



Analysis :

This section has several concrete objectives. The first of these is to locate Marlow more specifically within the wider history of colonialism. It is important that he goes to Africa in the service of a Belgian company rather than a British one. The map that Marlow sees in the Company offices shows the continent overlaid with blotches of color, each color standing for a different imperial power. While the map represents a relatively neutral way of describing imperial presences in Africa, Marlow's comments about the map reveal that imperial powers were not all the same. In fact, the yellow patch—"dead in the center"—covers the site of some of the most disturbing atrocities committed in the name of empire. The Belgian king, Leopold, treated the Congo as his private treasury, and the Belgians had the reputation of being far and away the most cruel and rapacious of the colonial powers. The reference to Brussels as a "whited sepulchre" is meant to bring to mind a passage from the Book of Matthew concerning hypocrisy. The Belgian monarch spoke rhetorically about the civilizing benefits of colonialism, but the Belgian version of the practice was the bloodiest and most inhumane.

This does not, however, mean that Conrad seeks to indict the Belgians and praise other colonial powers. As Marlow journeys into the Congo, he meets men from a variety of European nations, all of whom are violent and willing to do anything to make their fortunes. Moreover, it must be remembered that Marlow himself willingly goes to work for this Belgian concern: at the moment he decides to do so, his personal desire for adventure far outweighs any concerns he might have about particular colonial practices. This section of the book also introduces another set of concerns, this time regarding women. *Heart of Darkness* has been attacked by critics as misogynistic, and there is some justification for this point of view. Marlow's aunt does express a

naïvely idealistic view of the Company's mission, and Marlow is thus right to fault her for being "out of touch with truth." However, he phrases his criticism so as to make it applicable to all women, suggesting that women do not even live in the same world as men and that they must be protected from reality. Moreover, the female characters in Marlow's story are extremely flat and stylized. In part this may be because Marlow uses women symbolically as representatives of "home." Marlow associates home with ideas gotten from books and religion rather than from experience.

Home is the seat of naïveté, prejudice, confinement, and oppression. It is the place of people who have not gone out into the world and experienced, and who therefore cannot understand. Nonetheless, the women in Marlow's story exert a great deal of power. The influence of Marlow's aunt does not stop at getting him the job but continues to echo through the Company's correspondence in Africa. At the Company's headquarters, Marlow encounters a number of apparently influential women, hinting that all enterprises are ultimately female-driven.

Marlow's departure from the world of Belgium and women is facilitated, according to him, by two eccentric men. The first of these is Fresleven, the story of whose death serves to build suspense and suggest to the reader the transformations that Europeans undergo in Africa. By European standards, Fresleven was a good and gentle man, not one likely to die as he did. This means either that the European view of people is wrong and useless or else that there is something about Africa that makes men behave aberrantly. Both of these conclusions are difficult to accept practically or politically, and

thus the story of Fresleven leaves the reader feeling ambivalent and cautious about Marlow's story to come.

The second figure presiding over Marlow's departure is the Company's doctor. The doctor is perhaps the ultimate symbol of futility: he uses external measurements to try to decipher what he admits are internal changes; moreover, his subjects either don't return from Africa or, if they do, don't return to see him. Thus his work and his advice are both totally useless. He is the first of a series of functionaries with pointless jobs that Marlow will encounter as he travels toward and then up the Congo River.

Lecture 5

Heart of Darkness

Cecil Rhodes

He was an ardent believer in imperialism and colonialism.

He is a great example of the way people thought about taking over other countries.

Marlow's journey down the coast of Africa through his meeting with the chief accountant :
summery

The French steamer takes Marlow along the coast of Africa, stopping periodically to land soldiers and customshouse officers. Marlow finds his idleness vexing, and the trip seems vaguely nightmarish to him. At one point, they come across a French man-of-war shelling an apparently uninhabited forested stretch of coast. They finally arrive at the mouth of the Congo River, where Marlow boards another steamship bound for a point thirty miles upriver. The captain of the ship, a young Swede, recognizes Marlow as a seaman and invites him on the bridge. The Swede criticizes the colonial officials and tells Marlow about another Swede who recently hanged himself on his way into the interior.

Marlow disembarks at the Company's station, which is in a terrible state of disrepair. He sees piles of decaying machinery and a cliff being blasted for no apparent purpose. He also sees a group of black prisoners walking along in chains under the guard of another black man, who wears a shoddy uniform and carries a rifle. He remarks that he had already known the "devils" of violence, greed, and desire, but that in Africa he became acquainted with the "flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly."

Finally, Marlow comes to a grove of trees and, to his horror, finds a group of dying native laborers. He offers a biscuit to one of them; seeing a bit of white European yarn tied around his neck, he wonders at its meaning. He meets a nattily dressed white man, the Company's chief accountant (not to be confused with Marlow's friend the Accountant from the opening of the book). Marlow spends ten days here waiting for a caravan to the next station. One day, the chief accountant tells him that in the interior he will undoubtedly meet Mr. Kurtz, a first-class agent who sends in as much ivory as all the others put together and is destined for advancement. He tells Marlow to let Kurtz know that everything is satisfactory at the Outer Station when he meets him. The chief accountant is afraid to send a written message for fear it will be intercepted by undesirable elements at the Central Station.

The Belgian Congo

Heart of Darkness

Analysis :

Marlow's description of his journey on the French steamer makes use of an interior/exterior motif that continues throughout the rest of the book. Marlow frequently encounters inscrutable surfaces that tempt him to try to penetrate into the interior of situations and places. The most prominent example of this is the French man-of-war, which shells a forested wall of coastline. To Marlow's mind, the entire coastline of the African continent presents a solid green facade, and the spectacle of European guns firing blindly into that facade seems to be a futile and uncomprehending way of addressing the continent.

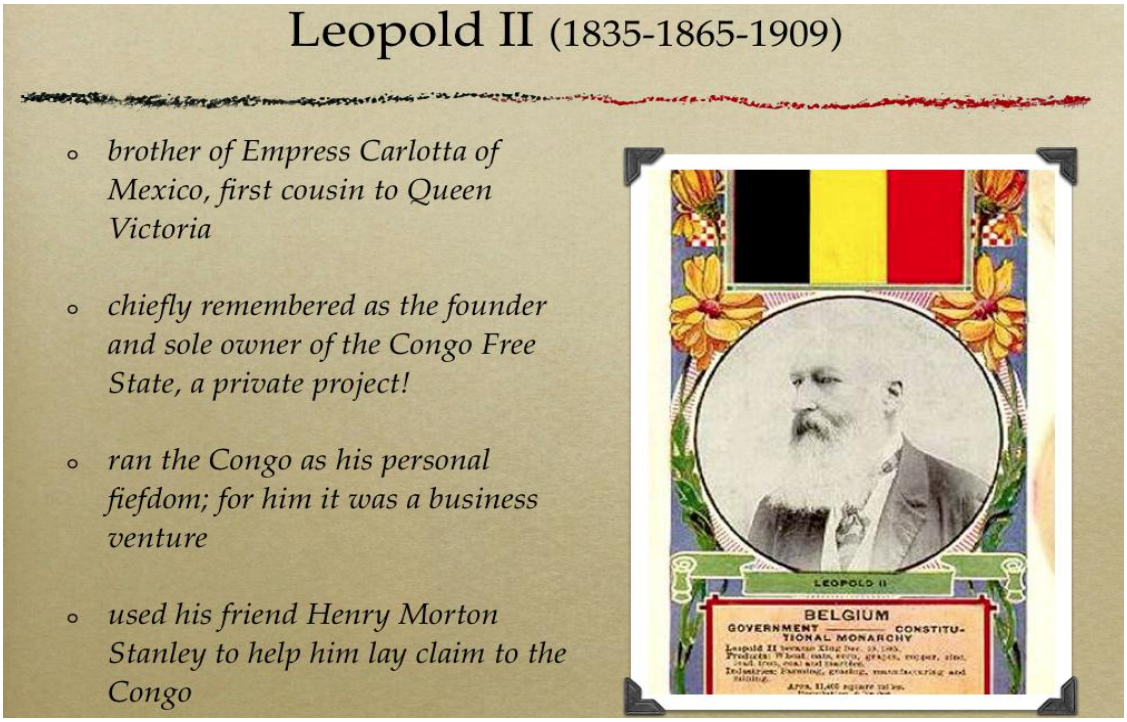
"The flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" is one of the central images with which Marlow characterizes the behavior of the colonists. He refers back to this image at a number of key points later in the story. It is thus a very important clue as to what Marlow actually thinks is wrong about imperialism—Marlow's attitudes are usually implied rather than directly stated.

Marlow's attitudes are usually implied rather than directly stated. Marlow distinguishes this devil from violence, greed, and desire, suggesting that the fundamental evil of imperialism is *not* that it perpetrates violence against native peoples, nor that it is motivated by greed. The flabby, weak-eyed devil seems to be distinguished above all by being shortsighted and foolish, unaware of what it is doing and ineffective.

The hand of the "flabby devil" is apparent in the travesties of administration and the widespread decay in the Company's stations. The colonials in the coastal station spend all their time blasting a cliff for no apparent reason, machinery lies broken all around, and supplies are

poorly apportioned, resting in abundance where they are not needed and never sent to where they are needed. Given the level of waste and inefficiency, this kind of colonial activity clearly has something other than economic activity at stake, but just what that something might be is not apparent. Marlow's comments on the "flabby devil" produce a very ambivalent criticism of colonialism.

The Belgian Congo



Heart of Darkness

Would Marlow approve of the violent exploitation and extortion of the Africans if it was done in a more clear-sighted and effective manner? This question is difficult to answer definitively.

On the other hand, Marlow is appalled by the ghastly, infernal spectacle of the grove of death, while the other colonials show no concern over it at all. For Marlow, the grove is the dark heart of the station. Marlow's horror at the grove suggests that the true evils of this colonial enterprise are dehumanization and death. All Marlow can offer these dying men are a few pieces of biscuit, and, despite the fact that Marlow is "not particularly tender," the situation troubles him.

In this section, Marlow finally learns the reason for the journey he is to take up the Congo, although he does not yet realize the importance this reason will later take on. The chief accountant is the first to use the name of the mysterious Mr. Kurtz, speaking of him in reverent tones and alluding to a conspiracy within the Company, the particulars of which Marlow never deciphers.

Again, the name "Kurtz" provides a surface that conceals a hidden and potentially threatening situation.

It is appropriate, therefore, that the chief accountant is Marlow's informant. In his dress whites, the man epitomizes success in the colonial world. His "accomplishment" lies in keeping up appearances, in looking as he would at home. Like everything else Marlow encounters, the chief accountant's surface may conceal a dark secret, in this case the native woman whom he has "taught"—perhaps violently and despite her "distaste for the work"—to care for his linens. Marlow has yet to find a single white man with a valid "excuse for being there" in Africa. More important, he has yet to understand why he himself is there.

Marlow's journey to the Central Station through the arrival of the Eldrado Exploring Expedition summery

Summary :

Marlow travels overland for two hundred miles with a caravan of sixty men. He has one white companion who falls ill and must be carried by the native bearers, who start to desert because of the added burden. After fifteen days they arrive at the dilapidated Central Station. Marlow finds that the steamer he was to command has sunk. The general manager of the Central Station had taken the boat out two days before under the charge of a volunteer skipper, and they had torn the bottom out on some rocks. In light of what he later learns, Marlow suspects the damage to the steamer may have been intentional, to keep him from reaching Kurtz. Marlow soon meets with the general manager, who strikes him as an altogether average man who leads by inspiring an odd uneasiness in those around him and whose authority derives merely from his resistance to tropical disease. The manager tells Marlow that he took the boat out in a hurry

to relieve the inner stations, especially the one belonging to Kurtz, who is rumored to be ill. He praises Kurtz as an exceptional agent and takes note that Kurtz is talked about on the coast.

The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it.

Marlow sets to work dredging his ship out of the river and repairing it, which ends up taking three months. One day during this time, a grass shed housing some trade goods burns down, and the native laborers dance delightedly as it burns. One of the natives is accused of causing the fire and is beaten severely; he disappears into the forest after he recovers. Marlow overhears the manager talking with the brickmaker about Kurtz at the site of the burned hut. He enters into conversation with the brickmaker after the manager leaves, and ends up accompanying the man back to his quarters, which are noticeably more luxurious than those of the other agents.

Marlow realizes after a while that the brickmaker is pumping him for information about the intentions of the Company's board of directors in Europe, about which, of course, Marlow knows nothing. Marlow notices an unusual painting on the wall, of a blindfolded woman with a lighted torch; when he asks about it, the brickmaker reveals that it is Kurtz's work.

The brickmaker tells Marlow that Kurtz is a prodigy, sent as a special emissary of Western ideals by the Company's directors and bound for quick advancement. He also reveals that he has seen confidential correspondence dealing with Marlow's appointment, from which he has construed that Marlow is also a favorite of the administration. They go outside, and the brickmaker tries to get himself into Marlow's good graces—and Kurtz's by proxy, since he believes Marlow is allied with Kurtz. Marlow realizes the brickmaker had planned on being assistant manager, and Kurtz's arrival has upset his chances.

Seeing an opportunity to use the brickmaker's influence to his own ends, Marlow lets the man believe he really does have influence in Europe and tells him that he wants a quantity of rivets from the coast to repair his ship. The brickmaker leaves him with a veiled threat on his life, but Marlow enjoys his obvious distress and confusion.

Marlow finds his foreman sitting on the deck of the ship and tells him that they will have rivets in three weeks, and they both dance around exuberantly. The rivets do not come, however. Instead, the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, a group of white men intent on "tear[ing] treasure out of the bowels of the land," arrives, led by the manager's uncle, who spends his entire time at the station talking conspiratorially with his nephew. Marlow gives up on ever receiving the rivets he needs to repair his ship, and turns to wondering disinterestedly about Kurtz and his ideals.

Analysis :

As Marlow describes his caravan journey through the depopulated interior of the colony, he remarks ironically that he was becoming "scientifically interesting"—an allusion to his conversation with the company doctor in Brussels. Given this, it is curious that Marlow talks so little about the caravan journey itself. In part, this is because it's not directly relevant to his story—during this time he is neither in contact with representatives of the Company nor moving directly toward Kurtz. Nonetheless, something about this journey renders Marlow a mystery even to himself; he starts to think of himself as a potential case study. Africa appears to him to be something that happens to a man, without his consent. One way to interpret this is that Marlow is disowning his own responsibility (and that of his fellow employees) for the atrocities committed by the Company on the natives. Because of its merciless environment and savage inhabitants, Africa itself is responsible for colonial violence.

The Belgian Congo

wealthy colony for Belgium

Lots of rubber, copper, and palm oil for export

Heart of Darkness

Forced to deal with his ailing companion and a group of native porters who continually desert and abandon their loads, Marlow finds himself at the top of the proverbial slippery slope.

The men he finds at the Central Station allow him to regain his perspective, however. The goings-on here are ridiculous: for example, Marlow watches a man try to extinguish a fire using a bucket with a hole in it. The manager and the brickmaker, the men in charge, are repeatedly described as hollow, "papier-mâché" figures. For Marlow, who has just experienced the surreal horrors of the continent's interior, the idea that a man's exterior may conceal only a void is disturbing. The alternative, of course, is that at the heart of these men lies not a void but a vast, malevolent conspiracy. The machinations of the manager and the brickmaker suggest that, paradoxically, both ideas are correct: that these men indeed conceal bad intentions, but that these intentions, despite the fact that they lead to apparent evil, are meaningless in light of their context.

The use of religious language to describe the agents of the Central Station reinforces this paradoxical idea. Marlow calls the Company's rank and file "pilgrims," both for their habit of carrying staves (with which to beat native laborers) and for their mindless worship of the wealth to be had from ivory.

"Ivory," as it echoes through the air of the camp, sounds to Marlow like something unreal rather than a physical substance. Marlow suggests that the word echoes because the station is only a tiny "cleared speck," surrounded by an "outside" that always threatens to close in, erasing the men and their pathetic ambitions. Over and over again in this section of the book human voices are hurled against the wilderness, only to be thrown back by the river's surface or a wall of trees. No matter how evil these men are, no matter how terrible the atrocities they commit against the natives, they are insignificant in the vastness of time and the physical world. Some critics have objected to *Heart of Darkness* on the grounds that it brushes aside or makes excuses for racism and colonial

violence, and that it even glamorizes them by making them the subject of Marlow's seemingly profound ruminations.

On a more concrete level, the events of this section move Marlow ever closer to the mysterious Kurtz. Kurtz increasingly appeals to Marlow as an alternative, no matter how dire, to

the repellent men around him. The painting in the brickmaker's quarters, which Marlow learns is Kurtz's work, draws Marlow in: the blindfolded woman with the torch represents for him an acknowledgment of the paradox and ambiguity of the African situation, and this is a much more sophisticated response than he has seen from any of the other Europeans he has encountered. To the reader, the painting may seem somewhat heavy-handed, with its overtly allegorical depiction of blind and unseeing European attempts to bring the "light" of civilization to Africa. Marlow, however, sees in it a level of self-awareness that offers a compelling alternative to the folly he has witnessed throughout the Company.

Lecture 6

The Modern English Novel

Heart of Darkness - text

The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a fl utter 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 it 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 realize 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 mizzen-mast.

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 of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marsh was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more somber every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

Heart of Darkness – Textual Analysis

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men.

Textual Analysis :

- The word "it" in line 3 refers to the "*Nellie," a cruising yawl, which is a boat or*

a vessel.

- The first and second paragraphs contain simile ("*like the beginning of an interminable* waterway"), metaphor ("red clusters of canvas"), personification (the air broods, "the haze rested"), and sensory imagery ("the air was dark").

Textual Analysis

However, there are no examples of oxymoron, two words that have opposite

meanings paired together.

- The mood of this sentence is lugubrious (gloomy, sorrowful), as indicated by the

"mournful" gloom that "broods."

- The Director of Companies is described as "nautical" (naval) and venerable

(deserving of respect) when the speaker claims that he and the other crew members

"affectionately watched his back" and saw him as the equivalent of a pilot, who is

"trustworthiness personified."

- Yarns are stories, which are woven together as yarn is woven into fabric. The context also suggests that their common interest in the sea held them together, creating a bond that allowed them to tolerate each other's "yarns."

- Th e narrator mentions four people who are on the boat with him: the accountant, the lawyer, Marlow, and the Director of Companies.

- The sentence is a compound-complex sentence; it has two or more independent clauses (there are three, separated by semicolons) and one or more dependent clauses ("hung from the wooded rises inland . . .").

The "mist" on the marsh is compared to a "gauzy and radiant fabric" that -

"drapes" (covers) in "diaphanous folds." The folds are part of the metaphor that compares the mist to gauzelike (light, soft clothes with tiny holes in it) fabric. "Diaphanous" (transparent) describes thin, gauzelike transparent fabric.

- The narrator's attitude toward the subject, his tone, is best described as inspired (enthused and stimulated). In paragraphs 1–4, the speaker is in awe of his environment and describes it in great detail, suggesting he is stimulated by the subject he is describing.

Lines 19–25 compare light and dark. The ending of the day creates "exquisite brilliance," shining water, "unstained light," and radiance. This light is contrasted with the "*gloom" in the west, which can be interpreted as darkness because it is "angered by the* approach of the sun [the light]," as if they are in battle.

- The final sentence creates an ominous (threatening) mood. The light, which is described as magnificent throughout the passage, is suddenly extinguished by the darkness— it has lost the battle and disappears as if "stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men." This sentence is threatening in that something that *was* great and brilliant has suddenly been extinguished.

- The passage appears to use symbolism to foreshadow later events because the

descriptions of the setting (the battles/conflicts between light and dark, the waterway/ horizon and land, nature and man) are likely symbolic of future conflicts that are only hinted at by the descriptions of the setting. It is unclear who the main character is from this passage. Several people are mentioned, but the narrator reveals more about the setting than himself and the actual main character of the novel (Marlow) is barely mentioned in this passage.

- The narrator and his crew members are on a boat on the Thames River, which runs through the city of London. This is evidenced in line 4.

Glossary of Literary Terms

- **oxymoron (apparent contradiction, i.e., calling love "a sweet anguish.")**
- **personification (giving human characteristics to a nonhuman object, i.e., "the laughing brook," or presenting an abstraction as a person: i.e., Justice as a blindfolded woman holding a set of scales.)**
- **synecdoche (substituting a part for a whole, i.e., referring to a hundred ships as "a hundred sails," or saying "We have fifteen head of cattle" when you, hopefully, have the entire animals, not just their heads.)**
- **metonymy (referring to something in terms of a closely-associated object, i.e., referring to a businessman as "a suit," or to a king as "the crown," or a preppy guy as "so J. Crew.")**

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :" كلمتان خفيفتان على اللسان ، ثقيلتان في الميزان ، حبيبتان إلى الرحمن : سبحان الله وبحمده ، سبحان الله العظيم"

أختكم

السالفة مليون