

21L.012, Heart of Darkness

(27 Nov)

Note that Joseph Conrad does not name the places he goes

Why not?

Heart of Darkness is not just about what happened to Marlow and Kurtz;  
also about the difficulty of telling the story;  
Marlow often treats words as if they float free of their traditional meanings

handout

- Livingstone quote
  - commerce and Christianity go hand in hand
  - Livingstone: leading force behind redefinition of colonialism to be not only imperial; should also enlighten and improve others
- Stanley: Africans are capable of being civilized through colonialism
- racists opposed colonialism; thought Africans couldn't be civilized
- Carlyle

How do we approach the story?

(29 Nov)

Marlow likes maps

- maps: link knowledge with economic interests
- people make maps only if they're needed
- 14: Marlow likes studying map with colors
- Marlow differentiates between different countries' colonialism
- Casement report

sponsored by U.K. to study Congo

(4 Dec)

Franklin expedition

- raised possibility that civilized white man taken out of environment may become worse

How to approach story?

- consider as a tale of 2 rivers
- 3
  - service used twice

- serve once
  - What's suggested about attention of narrator?
  - Conrad makes decision about setting: day is dwindling: we think we understand our actions, but there's darker truth
  - Meaning of service?
    - curious to say about river
    - thinks of river as a servant
  - Marlow
    - thinks of river as taking us to places
  - history
    - progress: savage → civil
    - progress: illusory: savage remains; civil a cloak that deludes
    - for Marlow, traveling up river removes cloak
  - 63
    - How does Conrad represent Africans?
- expresses surprise at Africans' restraint

(6 Dec)

(student presentation on Chinua Achebe, who criticized Conrad)

How do we reconcile quality of Conrad's writing with its potentially tainted nature?

- Is it satisfactory to say that it's a product of its time?
- consider distinction between Europeans and Africans
- Achebe accuses Conrad of dehumanizing Africans. What's that mean?

Conrad portrays Africans as objects rather than subjects