

Joseph Conrad

HEART OF DARKNESS

The Truth about Colonialism

- ◎ Acquisition by **brute force** of :
 1. Markets
 2. Raw materials
 3. Manpower
- ◎ While committing atrocities against the natives, colonialist believed they were acting morally.

Justifications

- ◉ The natives are savages in need of education and rehabilitation.
- ◉ Culturally inferior.
- ◉ The colonized nation is unable to manage and run itself properly.
- ◉ It is God's given duty of the colonizer to bring those stray people to Christianity .
- ◉ If left alone, the colonized peoples are a threat for the Western world.
- ◉ Hence, it is essential to put them under control.

Effects of Colonialism

- Dehumanization of both the oppressor and the oppressed.
- Erosion of colonized culture.
- Rejection among the colonized of everything belonging to Western culture.
- Advanced economy of colonized lands.
- [BBC Video](#)

Conrad's Biography

- He was born in Ukraine, in 1857, to a Polish family.
- His father worked as a translator of English and French literature.
- In 1861, his family was exiled as a result of his father's political activities.
- In 1869, both of Conrad's parents died of tuberculosis, and he went to Switzerland to live with his uncle.
- Conrad joined the French merchant marines, and made voyages to the West Indies.
- He joined the British merchant navy and swiftly climbed the ranks.
- By 1886, he was given British citizenship.
- He spent his life sailing the world.

Heart of Darkness

- It is based in part on a trip that Conrad took through modern-day Congo during his years as a sailor.
- Conrad captained a ship that sailed down the Congo River.
- He gave up this mission because an illness forced him to return to England.



Preface



- Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* retells the story of Marlow's job as an ivory transporter down the river Congo.
- Through his journey, Marlow develops an intense interest in investigating Kurtz, an ivory-procurement agent.
- Marlow is shocked upon seeing what the European traders have done to the natives.
- Joseph Conrad's exploration of the darkness is potentially inherent in all human hearts.

The Plot

- Charles Marlow, while on board through the river Thames, recounts his extraordinary journey up the river Congo.
- Marlow had been assigned by an ivory trading company to take command of a cargo boat.
- He hikes from the Outer Station to the Central Station and then up the river to the Inner Station.
- He witnesses the brutalization of the natives by white traders along the way.
- Marlow hears tantalizing stories of a Mr. Kurtz, the manager of the trading station and one of the company's most successful collectors of ivory.

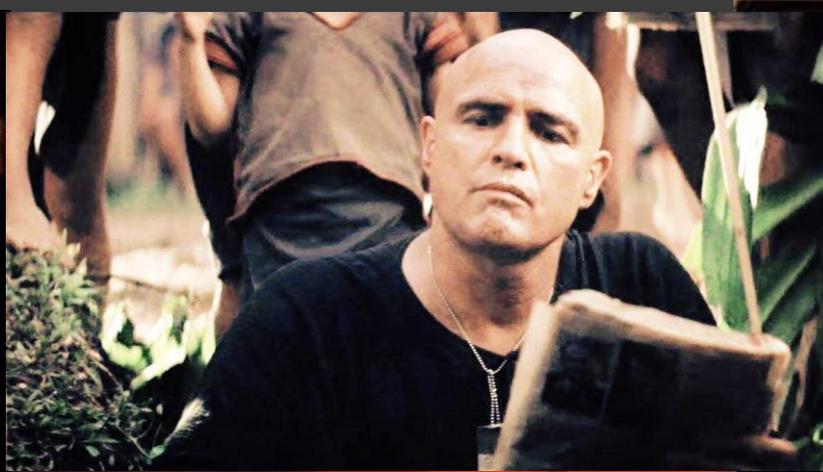
The Plot - Kurtz

- ◎ Marlow learns about the mysterious Kurtz:
 1. His civilized traits,
 2. His painting, musical abilities and great eloquence,
 3. His charismatic character,
 4. His god-like power over the natives, and the severed heads that surround his hut.



The Plot: Searching for Kurtz

- Marlow hears that Mr. Kurtz is sick.
- He sets off to find him.
- The long passage through the African heartland fills Marlow with a growing sense of dread.
- He and his company are attacked by African natives.
- Some of the crew are killed.





The Plot: Kurtz at last

- ◎ Upon finding him, Marlow concludes that:
 1. Kurtz had gone mad.
 2. He had become a bloody tyrant.
 3. He had exchanged his soul and any humanitarian ideals, he initially had upon his arrival in Africa, for greed and power.
- ◎ Kurtz dies and “*The horror, the horror*”, are his final words.



The Plot: Marlow returns to Belgium

- Marlow delivers to the trading company Kurtz's papers, including a report he had written for "The Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs."
- He visits Kurtz's fiancée, to whom he lies about Kurtz's final words.
- He says he died proclaiming her name.
- Marlow is disgusted with himself, his lie, and the whole experience.

The Title

- ◎ The title of this novel refers to three aspects of «darkness»:
 1. **geographical**, as Congo is in the heart of Africa, the «dark» continent,
 2. **political**, namely, the dark side of imperialism,
 3. **human**, as both Kurtz's and Marlowe's dark sides of their souls are explored.

Setting

- The Thames which takes to the heart of the civilization. The deck of the “Nellie”.
- The Congo River which takes to the heart of African colonization. The cargo boat.



Narrators

- There are **two** narrators.
- An anonymous passenger on a pleasure ship, who listens to Marlow's story.
- Marlow himself, a middle-aged ship's captain.



In the Jungle

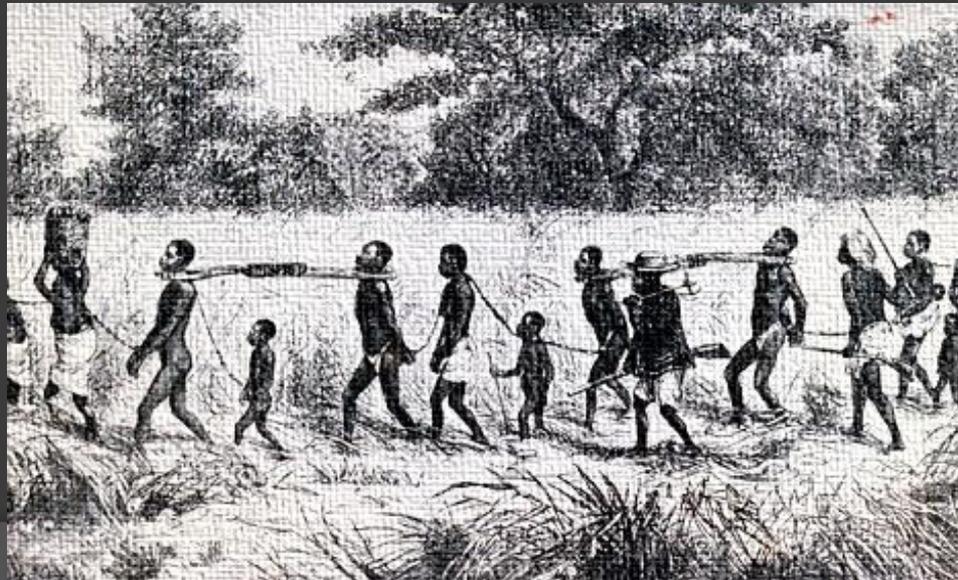
- ◉ *At last we opened a reach. A rocky cliff appeared, mounds of turned-up earth by the shore, houses on a hill, others with iron roofs, amongst a **waste** of excavations, or hanging to the declivity. A continuous noise of the rapids above hovered over this scene of inhabited **devastation**. **A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants**. A jetty projected into the river. A blinding sunlight drowned all this at times in a sudden recrudescence of glare. 'There's your Company's station,' said the Swede, pointing to three wooden barrack-like structures on the rocky slope. 'I will send your things up. Four boxes did you say? So. Farewell.'*

*I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of **decaying** machinery, a stack of **rusty** rails. To the left a clump of trees made a shady spot, where **dark things** seemed to stir feebly. I blinked, the path was steep. A horn tooted to the right, and I saw the black people run. A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock. They were building a railway. The cliff was not in the way or anything; but this **objectless** blasting was all the work going on.*

*A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They **walked erect** and **slow**, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails. 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** whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. Another report from the cliff made me think suddenly of that ship of war I had seen firing into a continent.*

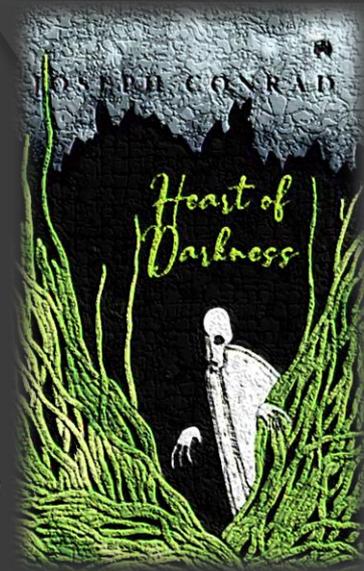


It was the same kind of ominous voice; but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. All their meagre breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages.



CONCLUSIONS

- In Heart of Darkness Conrad throws light on the unpalatable truth about the white «civilizing mission» ,which, in short, could be summed up with Kurtz's final words: «*the horror! the horror!*»
- The awareness of the abyss of brutality men are capable to reach constitutes the real burden our conscience is still unable to process.



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