

The Significance of the Frame in **Heart of Darkness**

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Abstract

Heart of Darkness is often read as a fictional account of Kurtz's or Marlow's experience in Africa and of its implications on Conrad's views on civilization. What takes place on the **Nellie** is usually regarded as a framing device, although some critics have paid some attention to its thematic contribution. My paper deals with this "framing device" as an integral part of the novel, showing that it defines more comprehensively Conrad's somewhat Freudian position with respect to the question of civilization. I have tried to illustrate that social interaction as viewed by Conrad is marked by invasion and aggression and that the achievement of civilization lies in its having been able to "humanize" such interaction through a process of sublimation. Moreover, Marlow's pose on the **Nellie** serves as a counterpart of Kurtz's in Africa. So, while Marlow is deflated, the use of the counterpoise serves to reflect the march of civilization. Here we can see Conrad's struggle to hold on to some belief in progress even if the result is naive optimism. This is a manifestation of his will to believe, one of the most characteristic features of the Victorian Age.

Conrad's fictional works testify to his genuine interest in such matters as history, civilization, progress, and international politics, and all these topics have received more or less ample attention from scholars, though not without some controversy. **Heart of Darkness** is no exception. However, in the critics' attempt to understand the question of civilization in the novel, the framing device has often remained peripheral in contrast with the embedded narrative of Marlow's experience in the Congo. For most readers Conrad's novel relates Marlow's and/or Kurtz's nightmarish adventures in Africa, an assumption greatly detrimental to the formal conception of the work and to its theme. That the damage is real can be seen when the outer narrative is accorded a closer analysis in its own right as an integral part of the novel. It will prove enriching to the whole. As the two narratives reverberate and interact with each other, generating centripetal and centrifugal tensions, they, with the reading focus corrected, will underscore some basic issues of the novel and bring up new thematic dimensions.

What Marlow does on the **Nellie** is apparently to paint in language, colorful, impassioned, and exuberant, and to relive by the power inherent in the imagination, a life experience in Africa characterized by tortuous struggle against a tenebrous, forestal wilderness with far-reaching implications. Actually, he is providing, though perhaps unconsciously, an extension to his journey. What takes place on the **Nellie** is, thus, not merely a social gathering to frame the "main" story, but rather a European counterpart, formally and thematically significant, to Marlow's African adventure. On the one hand, the earlier experience is permeated by confrontational interaction. The key concept here is invasion, both literal and figurative, and one can at the cost of tedium parade quotations all tending to the same effect--man invading and/or facing counterinvasion by the wilderness. The presence of Europeans in Africa is often described as a "fantastic invasion"¹, and nature responded with "a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence" (30). Whether the journey is interpreted in psychological, moral, or anthropological terms²-- the three levels are not necessarily mutually exclusive--the wilderness stands for man's evil potential, his rebellious, rapacious side, the Jungian shadow or the Freudian id. Viewed with a high degree of primitive animism, it represents abolition of social restraints, a condition of existence where man has freedom without responsibility, power without moral scruples. Philosophically, it symbolizes Nature as opposed to organized society. As the Machiavellian uncle advised his opportunistic nephew, the manager of the central station, while the two plotted in the dark, "Anything--anything can be done in this country" (pp. 32-33).

Invasion also characterizes the European version of the experience. It constitutes a pervasive factor of the artistic conception of the world, sharpening a sense of incremental recurrence informing all life and defining Conrad's fictional universe as a system of mirrors that throw back and forth reflections of men, relations, and events, all manifesting the enduring image of invasion, of confrontational interaction in a life of strife and struggle for better or for worse. The first narrator, for example, speaks of sunset as if it were an invasion of darkness by light, "only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun" (p.4). But the sun, with a possible pun, suffers and is killed. Light is put out by the forces of darkness," 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" (p.4). Such imagery³ actually foreshadows Marlow's verbalized experience. As Kurts, the Promethean hero and the sun of enlightened Europe, was put out in Africa, so is the sun in the west, the region of gloom. Such a vision, not only on its astronomical but also moral levels, reflects a sophisticated and rather pessimistic mind⁴. The primary narrator is able to intuit what Marlow had to discover by firsthand experience. It seems that Conrad's epistemology admits of both poetic intuition and empirical knowledge, though the latter has the advantage of concreteness.

Moreover, it is the primary narrator that first meditates on the subject of history, civilization and English imperialism; and Marlow, as if the two men make up some sort of psychological unity, starts out to talk in the same vein about the Romans who invaded England and who were "men enough to face the darkness" (p.6). The imagery and even the terms he employs evoke the African experience very vividly. He speaks of marshes, forests, jungles, disease, savages, and death "skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush" (p.6). The Roman general who had "his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna by and by if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate" (p.6) is an early specimen of Kurtz and of the manager of the Central Station whose greatest qualification was that he could stand the climate and who thus had his eye on a promotion following Kurtz's death. History as envisioned by the two narrators unfolds as a somewhat uncanny repetition of events and characters.

On the other hand, in Europe as earlier in Africa, Marlow is associated with invasion, though in his own way. In the Congo he was physically and morally an intruder. As a torch-bearer bringing fresh from Europe some odd notions and practices, he was somehow alienated from most of the people there, a late Kurtz, though not as conscious as his predecessor.

Like all invaders, he was molested, feared, propitiated, threatened, and finally attacked. His was the invasion of stark reality by a seemingly redeeming, work-bound idealism, of the past by the present, of Nature by Society. In Europe, having had his fill of the East, he used to loaf about "hindering... [his friends] in [their] work and invading [their] houses, just as though [he] had got a heavenly mission to civilize [them]" (pp.7-8). This reenacts Kurtz's mission in Africa, at least as first intended. And now on the **Nellie** Marlow is engaged in some form of invasion, using speech as weapon to enlighten his audience even if his assertive imposition and confrontational attitude are to be resented, though somehow gently. The "haze" (p.3), the "dark" (p.3), "the mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest town on earth (p.3), and the nearby "Essex marshes" (p.4), all suggest the African experience. On the **Nellie** Marlow, having invaded his friends' homes for his stated purpose, poses like an idol with "sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect... his arms dropped and the palms of hands outwards" (p.6). He "with the legs folded before him... [has] the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without the lotus-flower" (p.6), when the story is concluded, he sits apart, "indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha" (p.79).

The pose has often been taken at face value (and this may have been Conrad's intention), but the novel seems to suggest another reading. On the one hand, the pose is so heavily insisted upon that it somehow grows ludicrous, overleaping the bounds of realism. It becomes a gross incongruity in the fictional world of the novel. On the other hand, the primary narrator, who presents Marlow to us and seems to know him fairly well, mentions no change in Marlow after his **rite de passage** and nothing about the crucial journey itself, at least by way of a better introduction. This omission is significant since, as I have shown earlier, this narrator cannot be categorized with the other listeners,⁵ some of whom apparently doze off in self-defense as Marlow relates his adventures. For the anonymous narrator the Director of Companies inspires a feeling of pragmatic order and safety, while Marlow is not strongly associated with any sort of comfort, material or otherwise. The contrast is two-edged, serving to underline the materialistic world in which the audience is embroiled, and also to reveal how superficial and fragile Marlow's credibility is.

Furthermore, notwithstanding his journey to the heart of darkness, temptation by a Congolese Mara, and meditative pose, Marlow's awakening is somehow sterile and at best partial, lacking the conclusive and authoritative verities which sum up life on earth and which Buddha announced when he came back from the wilderness. We are not

concerned with Marlow's practical skills as a sailor. Here he is undeniably very perceptive and extremely efficient, "I had to watch the steering, and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook. There was surface truth in these things, to save a man" (p.37) But this side belongs to Europe and has, therefore, to be excluded. This done, his African experience remains greatly lyrical and personal, as he himself attests in a gesture of decorum, "I don't want to bother you so much with what happened to me personally" (p.7) Moreover, his grasp of African reality, punctuated by recurrent "as ifs" and "as thoughts," is often impressionistic,⁶ a fact which betrays its superficiality and affective nature. Another factor that may have caused his blurred vision is the dream sensation that informs the journey and is explicitly stated and emphasized. As narrator he also strives to arouse in his listeners responses similar to his by conveying the ordeal with all its paraphernalia, while at the same time admitting that, although the experience threw "a kind of light" (70), it was not very clear nor extraordinary. He associates it with the incomprehensible "fascination of the abomination" (p.6). To bear this out, he often states that on various occasions he was baffled, puzzled, and fascinated.

Marlow's dilemma results from his being two incompatible persons simultaneously, a Buddha-like preacher and a narrator in a fictional work by Joseph Conrad. When the experience is so mystical and vague, the communication cannot be lucid, especially if truth to details and to impressions is of utmost value,"... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life sensation of any given epoch of one's existence--that which makes its truth, its meaning--its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream, alone.. "(p.28). so, although he is able to detect the kinship of all human beings in spite of geographical and historical barriers denying it and to classify people and souls, when he comes to formulate a truth of life, he seems too overwhelmed by the experience to be able to deliver a comprehensible and lucid message, however valuable he can be. Truth lies too deep for him to express it cogently. He approaches it steadily but cautiously, trying to explore it from all sides. Ultimately, however, it seems to elude his firm grasp. He remains impressionistic:

Droll thing life is--that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself--that comes too late--a crop of undistinguishable regrets. I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory,

without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. (pp.71-72)

Here we have a torrent of language, but truth remains muddled and confused. Here we have a good example of a paradox which Edward said locates in Conrad's art, "This difficult paradox, that language is at once excess and poverty, stands very near the heart of Nietzsche's work, and, I believe, plays a considerable role in Conrad's handling of narrative language" (Said, 1976:68). Marlow is striving against all odds, particularly against solipsism, to see through a motley of incompatible impressions. Life is a composite of drollery, mystery, merciless logic, and tenuity. One may get self-knowledge, but too late. Does this make life droll, merciless, mysterious, or futile? And what is death? Wrestling with it is unexciting, and yet the contest has all the elements of excitement. The arena is out of the ordinary, and so are the accompanying feelings or rather no-feelings. And, when all has been said about life and death, what follows amounts to a disclaimer, "If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be" (p.72). Marlow may be true to his impressions and visions, but he is not competent enough to disentangle truth from this web of solipsism. He cannot even name things precisely. For him, as well as for Kurtz, truth is a feeling, an emotion, but not a verifiable reality. Consequently, Marlow is greatly responsible for the ambiguities underlined in such a critical opinion:

A fiction which develops contradictory representations and condenses incompatible positions will speak in different voices to its readers, and these include the professional critics who, in the vast literature generated by the novella, have brought diverse systems of meaning to explain its ambivalencies. (Parry, 1983:20).

Moreover, Marlow, believing that a saving illusion is sometimes better than truth, resorted to a falsehood rather than to enlightenment when he lied to the Intended about Kurtz's last word before his death. It is true that his motive is justifiable, but only in the light of his conventional view of women. It is also true that he is strongly opposed to lying. However, his lie to the Intended is of particular importance since it came immediately after his journey to the heart of darkness and since he has not repudiated it. Thus, it somehow debunks his Buddha-like pose because in Buddhism a lie, as he himself believes, has something mortal about it. In fact, one Buddhist commandment is a categorical injunction against lying.

With all this in mind, I believe that, like the "pitiful Jupiter" (p.61) carried on a stretcher, the Buddha pose, not as a narrative technique **per se**⁷ serves as one of the major ironies of the novel, underscoring a formal conflict between two common tendencies in fiction, the inflationary and the deflationary,⁸ or, more specifically, between the romance and the novel proper, two genres which are distinct in conception but not often in practice. Marlow, plagued perhaps by the compulsion to repeat or, like the Ancient Mariner, by the need for therapeutically disburdening confession, and equipped with the power of poetic language and with knowledge not wisdom, presumptuously poses like Buddha.⁹ Moreover, he batters the rebellious heads of his audience in an act of self-assertion. What is supposed to be an interactional discourse, a social gathering and conversation over a game of dominoes--a clear instance of civilized warfare --- turns into a transactional discourse¹⁰ where he does all the talking and where his friends ought to tolerate his excesses without comment. When one of them demurs, Marlow bursts out:

Absurd!.. This is the worst of trying to tell... Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like the hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperatures normal--you hear--normal from year's end to year's end. And you say, Absurd! Absurd be--exploded! Absurd! My dear boys. (p.48)

And later on he chides them with, "You cannot understand. How could you? (p.50). Furthermore, what marks face-to-face communication is the real presence of the other,¹¹ but Marlow, aided by darkness and absorbed in introspection and memory, imposes himself almost unchecked, on others, thus undermining their very existence, as Kurtz inflicted literal death on the African rebels who resisted his unrestrained egoism. Marlow's emotional outbursts and more emotional reliving of the experience contrast with his peaceful and impassive pose. To say that his story falls on deaf ears and there is a great measure of truth in this claim, especially if we exclude the primary narrator--only serves to emphasize his assertive encroachment, bringing to mind, though not to be identified with, the Professor's lecture in Ionesco's "The Lesson."

Nevertheless, what redeems such a protracted verbal invasion is the "idea at the back of it," One may say that Marlow takes himself too seriously on the **Nellie**, as he did in Africa. There he insisted on doing his job, but his mission miscarried. However, we should not idealize his work ethics. He, too, wanted to get on in the world and once had momentarily a nonchalant attitude toward his steamer. And his devotion to the black

workers sprang from the help they offered him and not from any feeling of human fraternity. "Fine fellows-- cannibals -- in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them" (p.35). When he explains the kind of relationship that was generated between him and his helmsman, he says, "Well, don't you see, he had done something, he had steered; for months I had him at my back--a help--an instrument. It was a kind of partnership. He steered for me--I had to look after him.." (p.52). Work helped Marlow not only to connect himself with reality but also to deal with it and try to master it. Accordingly, work can be considered a sublimation of man's natural aggressiveness, channelled into the service of social life and recruited for the purpose of progress and communal security. And on the **Nellie** he runs the risk of being alienated from his friends, or at least of being boring, but he insists on relating his tale to the end. Actually, his narrative, in spite of falling short of Buddha's well-defined truths and its failure to break through the prison of the lyrical into the rationally lucid, is a fine piece of work, both in terms of the effort exerted and on account of the effect produced, and his stubborn perseverance reflects a solid belief in it. His lyrical involvement in the narrative duplicates a similar stance toward his work in Africa, and both are manifestations of a sublimation effected by society. Marlow's work ethics¹² may suggest Carlyle, but only on the surface. Freud, I believe, and as Ian Watt indicates (Watt, 1980: 167) lies at the root of the issue, intellectually though not historically. Freud in his **Civilization and its Discontents** says, almost echoing Marlow about thirty years later:

No other technique for the conduct of life attaches the individual so firmly to reality as laying emphasis on work; for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality, in the human community. The possibility it offers of displacing a large amount of libidinal components, whether narcissistic, aggressive or even erotic, on to professional work and on to the human relations connected with it lends it a value by no means second to what it enjoys as something indispensable to the preservation and justification of existence in society. (Freud, 1961: 27)

Herein, then, lies a value, expiating and justifiable even if Marlow's mission on the **Nellie** seems to miscarry too. When he ceases, the Director of Companies, who, as I have shown, stands for pragmatic safety and order in the gloom of business, observes, "We have lost the first of the ebb" (p.79), as if he were implying that such talk as Marlow's may endanger man's chances of efficiency and success in everyday life. So, Marlow, the champion of efficiency as a redeeming force, is likely to defeat his ideal. Has not the primary narrator commented at the outset

that he and the rest are "fated... to hear one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences (p.7)? As for him, he has gained some concrete application for his intuitive knowledge of life; for the rest, they leave sadder but not wiser. Accordingly, Marlow's experience in Africa is repeated on the **Nellie** in Europe with a significant difference. Africa is anthropological and fictional past, whereas Europe is present. The march of civilization can be assessed in terms of the difference. Those who rebelled against Kurtz's atrocious practices had their heads cut off and hung on posts as an indication of his unrestrained power. Those who comment on Marlow's tale as "absurd" are only reproved with "You don't understand," another act of imposition. There is difference in the degree but not in the nature of the response. Consequently, the Buddha pose has another dimension which imparts considerable thematic value to it. It acts as a counterpose to Kurtz's apotheosis in the Congo. Buddha, who, as history tells us, refused to be deified, is set against Jupiter, a classical god with human passions but with superhuman powers. Europe as a place where equality and justice, at least theoretically, are the bases of society serves as the counterpoint, both actual and hypothetical, of Africa, where one man may acquire absolute power without responsibility. The exaggerated presentation of the Buddha pose is meant to show how assertive and imposing Marlow is determined to be and how short he falls of Kurtz's deadly possibilities. Thanks are due to civilization, which, as a process of fettering man's instincts, refines and softens his combative nature. Sublimation is one mechanism in this respect since Nature cannot be eradicated as Conrad seems to believe.¹³ Freud remarks in this context that

sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important role in civilized life. If one were to yield to a first impression, one would say that sublimation is a vicissitude, which has been forced upon the instincts entirely by civilization. (Freud, 1961:44)

Conrad realizes that hypocrisy may result from such measures, but his fear of anarchy at the turn of the nineteenth century finds expression here. Civilization is also a process of exchange, some sort of a deal, "Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security" (Freud, 1961:62). To this transaction the guests on the **Nellie** may owe their safety against the emotional outbursts of Marlow, whose individual, self-assertive freedom, unlike Kurtz's, is restrained by the laws which society has developed and promulgated to regulate its life, "This

replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization.. the first requisite of civilization, therefore, is that of justice". (Freud, 1961:42).

With this important social law in practice, no individual has the right to the freedom which made Kurtz a ferocious god. And Kurtz's appeal for justice has other grounds, those of Nature. No man can escape the possibilities of Kurtz's fate in Africa if put under the same circumstances. This is the law of Nature, and this is Kurtz's self-defense, as if he were saying, "I am a man." Both his appeal for justice and his judgment "The horror, the horror" are recognitions on his part that social values cannot be denied, and here lies his great moral victory, his superiority over the other fallen Europeans. Here is an acknowledgement that civilization has somehow accomplished something and a condemnation of a condition where one man goes beyond the common pale of equality and justice.

These are some of the challenges and achievements of civilization, but Conrad is hesitant about taking an outspoken, straightforward, and unequivocal attitude. His ambivalence coincides with Marlow's. Kurtz is more of a hero, impressive and interesting, than the manager or even the over-dressed accountant. And Brussels is a whited sepulcher, a hypocritical city of sham morality. However, despite this apparent, non-committal, neither/nor stance, one would rather be in Europe than in Africa, certainly on the **Nellie** than on the Congo steamer, although the fascination of the abomination lurks under the preference, hence the two-way tension. After all, no one cries "the horror, the horror" on the **Nellie**. One would rather have his head hammered by a Buddha lecture than blown up by Kurtz's guns, especially when only one such creature and thousands of average people make up the community. **Heart of Darkness**, thus, when the outer narrative is given enough critical attention to adjust the focus a little, regains its unity and has some of its thematic issues underscored, while at the same time it proves to have a deep current of cautious, somehow naive optimism which forms a part of its meaning. Consequently, the novel adumbrates hesitantly and timidly a world where progress is an achieved fact, notwithstanding its falling short of human aspiration. This is what Conrad holds on to. This is where he, like a typical Victorian, displays his will to believe. The question is, can man's ideals be reached? It seems that man's tragedy lies in his capacity to idealize more nobly than his nature can deliver, no matter how much labor he is determined to undertake. Anyway, "'Mistah Kurtz--he dead'."

Notes

1. Joseph Conrad, **Heart of Darkness**, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1971), pp. 23,33,59. Subsequent references to the novel will be taken from this edition and will be cited in the text.
2. See, for example, Albert Guerard, "The Journey Within," in **Conrad the Novelist** (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1958) and Jerome Thale, "Marlow's Quest," **University of Toronto Quarterly**, XXIV (July, 1955), 351-58. For a Freudian analysis of the novel see Frederick Crews, "Conrad's Uneasiness--and Ours" in his **Out of My System: Psychoanalysis, Ideology, and Critical Opinion** (New York: Oxford U.P., 1975), pp. 41-62. See also Lillian Feder, "Marlow's Descent into Hell," **Nineteenth Century Fiction**, IX (March, 1955), 280 - 92.
3. Donald Benson argues that the opening paragraphs of the novel are concerned with cosmic space and time, and he vaguely suggests a relationship between the introduction and the remaining part of the novel. See his **Heart of Darkness: The Grounds of Civilization in an Alien Universe**, **Texas Studies in Literature and Language**, VII (Winter, 1966), 339-47.
4. See, for example, Robert Evans, "Conrad's Underworld," **Modern Fiction Studies**, II (May, 1956), 56-62. Evans lumps the listeners together, considering them unfit for Marlow's narrative. See also William Bysshe Stein, "The Lotus Posture and **Heart of Darkness**," **Modern Fiction Studies**, II (Winter, 1956-57), 135-37; and Seymour Gross, "A Further Note on the Function of the Frame in 'Heart of Darkness'," **Modern Fiction Studies**, III (Summer, 1957), 167-70.
5. Seymour Gross, responding to Robert Evans and William Bysshe Stein, contends that the first narrator, being "precisely 'the audience the author is trying to convince'," cannot be lumped with the others.
6. For a study of Conrad's impressionism see Cedric Watts, "Conrad's Absurdist Techniques: A Terminology," **Conradiana**, IX, ii (1977), 141-48; Todd K. Bender, "Conrad's Literary Impressionism," **Conradiana**, X, iii (1978), 211 - 224; and Ian Watt, "**Heart of Darkness**," in **Conrad in the Nineteenth Century** (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980). pp. 169 ff.
7. It is significant in this regard that only in **Heart of Darkness**, which is one of four works where Marlow appears, does the question of who the protagonist is become controversial. There are two camps in this respect. F. R. Leavis believes that Kurtz is the protagonist, whereas Albert Guerard gives the title to Marlow. In "Youth," **Lord Jim**, and **Chance** the narrative technique does not draw attention to itself as much as in this novel. Marlow there is only a narrator, though in "Youth" he is unquestionably one of the major characters, if not the major one.

8. The terms "inflationary" and "deflationary" are borrowed from Maurice Z. Shroder, "The Novel as a Genre," reprinted from **The Massachusetts Review** (1963) in Philip Stevick (ed) **The Theory of the Novel** (New York: The Free Press, 1967).
9. In many of his novels Conrad deals with the discrepancy between the actual and the ideal, reality and fantasy. He insists on self-knowledge as opposed to self-aggrandizement and self-idealization. As Stein puts it in **Lord Jim**, one has to immerse oneself in the destructive element. When a character fails to do so, he is usually deflated. Jim, Nostromo, Kurtz, and somehow Heyst are examples in this context.
10. "Interactional" and "transactional" are used to distinguish the two kinds of discourse by Gillian Brown and George Yule in **Discourse Analysis** (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983), p.1
11. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, **The Social Construction of Reality** (New York: Anchor, 1966), pp. 28ff.
12. Although there is some ambivalence in Conrad's attitude toward imperialism, Marlow believes that on the basis of work and efficiency it may sometimes be justified.
13. As Benson argues in "**Heart of Darkness: The Grounds of Civilization in an Alien Universe**," reality in the novel is often associated with what is natural in man and the environment.

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