

Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Lecture - 12
Heart of Darkness - Part 7

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the elder man, who seemed very vexed. The other explained that it had come with a fleet of canoes in charge of an English half-caste clerk Kurtz had with him; that Kurtz had apparently intended to return himself, the station being by that time bare of goods and stores, but after coming three hundred miles, had suddenly decided to go back, which he started to do alone in a small dugout with four paddlers, leaving the half-caste to continue down the river with the ivory. The two fellows there seemed astounded at anybody attempting such a thing. They were at a loss for an adequate motive. As to me, I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, yon relief, on thoughts of home—perhaps; setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station. I did not know the motive. Perhaps he was just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake. His name, you understand, had not been pronounced once. He was 'that man.' The half-caste,



So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth-Century Fiction. We were looking at Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. So, from this lecture onwards, we will begin to wind up with these particular texts, and having discussed the salient and fundamental features that this text represents, and its political importance along with the literary importance that it carries today.

So, one of the things we have discussed already about Heart of Darkness is the politics of representation, how are things represented in Heart of Darkness as entire style of narration. And as we may know by now, it is a very complex narrative style, I mean it does superficially adhere to classic realism, but then it also keeps exposing the fundamental inadequacies of classic realism when it comes to narrating an experience like this.

And if you remember the last lecture the point where we stopped, where Marlow was admitting his inability, he was sort of acknowledging and screaming out the fact that you know he is unable to tell you the story. And he kept asking the audience, do you see the

story, can I tell you the story, can I convey to you what really happened. And of course, that was a rhetorical question because he knows very well that he cannot do it, he cannot convey completely what happens in Congo, and that we discussed how there was how the novel represents it sort of foregrounded his you know narrative inadequacies, and in that sense it is a very quasi postmodern novel *Heart of Darkness*.

So, it is one of those novels which are almost everything it's late Victorian, it's definitely modernist, it has lots of stream of consciousness technique. And also since we anticipate a lot postmodern narrative style in terms of his foregrounding of his narrative inadequacies and unreliability which is you know innately embedded in that novel, and which is connected to the whole sense of centerlessness that *Heart of Darkness* foregrounds and dramatizes.

So, you know everything about *Heart of Darkness* is centerless, the narrative is centerless, and Marlow is the primary narrator, but then he is the first person to acknowledge his you know inability to narrate, his struggle to narrate. And then we have the characters, so quite centerless as well, there is a degree of hollowness about the characters as well.

And we talked about how in one of the lectures if you remember how the hollowness in *Heart of Darkness*, it is the combination of spectrality and unknowability right. So, and of course, an example of exhaustion as well, so it's exhaustion, unknowability and spectrality all put together which constitutes the hollowness in *Heart of Darkness*. There is a degree of existential exhaustion; there is a degree of ideals exhaustion. There is no ideas left; there is nothing left to salvage, redeem. And what is foregrounded and what comes across very heavily is a naked exploitative machinery of imperialism.

There is a completely naked enterprise; there is nothing you can dress up that with. There is no Christian narrative; there is no civilizing narrative; there is no missionary, a noble narrative that you can use to redeem the exploitative machinery of imperialism right, and that is something which *Heart of Darkness* does very well.

And of course, we have to remember and I mentioned this already, and now I will repeat myself that it is about Belgian imperialism, it is not about British imperialism. It is Belgian imperialism in Congo, it's Belgians in the Congo. And the difference between the Belgian imperialism and British imperialism was fundamentally that the Belgians

never even attempted to dress up imperialism as some kind of a civilizing mission, I mean it was very nakedly evident that it was a machinery of exploitation, it was very explicit. It is nothing that even sort of tried to hide or conceal this exploitative face of imperialism right, so that is the setting that Conrad is describing that is the setting that Marlow in the novel is inhabiting.

Now, in this lecture, we will start with Marlow's first glimpse of Kurtz, you know how does he first see Kurtz and again we have seen already how the novel is actually quite cinematic in quality, there is a lot of close up technique, and there is also lot of defamiliarizing technique right. So, defamiliarization and delayed decoding of things which we have discussed already, and both techniques they contribute to the complex visual narrative in Heart of Darkness, a complex visual grammar in Heart of Darkness.

And that is important for us to understand, because you know the whole novel is narrated to us through a certain focus point, a certain focalized point, and Marlow is a focalized perspective, the focalized viewpoint through which we get to see what happened in a Congo. And of course, Marlow is he is a very unreliable focal point and that unreliability of Marlow, it gets translated it gets accounted for in the novel as well, because the entire novel then becomes very, very mysterious and cryptic.

So, we, as readers, we share the defamiliarization that Marlow experienced; we share the entire delayed decoding that Marlow experienced, I mean even we as readers we cannot quite decode what happens in Heart of Darkness. So, that delayed decoding that defamiliarization all that gets spilled over from Marlow's experiential frame into the narrative frame that we inhabit. So, the narrative frame in Heart of Darkness is one in which delayed decoding and defamiliarization are embedded, innately embedded that is something which we keep saying as readers in Heart of Darkness.

And I think I mentioned at one of my articles on Heart of Darkness if you wish to read more on a more complex arguments about delayed decoding storytelling and existential exhaustion, there is an article of mine which got published in a journal called Janus Head which you can download for free if you just Google up my name, I have it uploaded in my academia.edu website. So, you can download that for free. And if you still have problems in downloading it, do mention that in the NPTEL forum that we have in this course, and my TAs can upload it for you to read ok.

Now, let us take a look at this section which should be on your screen when Marlow sees Kurtz for the first time, and he is narrating the experience of seeing Kurtz for the first time. So, this should be on your screen. I will just read out the lines first. As to me, I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse; the dugout, four paddling savages, and a lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, yon relief, on thoughts of home – perhaps; setting his face towards a depth of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station.

Now, this particular phrase I am just going to pick up on this a little bit and expand on it, the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters. So, this is a literal description or physical description of Kurtz's physical movement, but it also becomes very quickly a symbolic movement right. So, Kurtz is a lonely white man, who turns his back suddenly on the headquarters. So, he is basically what we call in spy fiction and spy cinema today, a rogue agent right. So, someone who turns his back on the machinery which had historically created him right, so Kurtz is one of the first examples in British fiction on rogue agents.

So, he is an agent of imperialism, he is someone which who imperialism constructed. So, we are told over and over again that he was a finest soldier of imperialism; he was a finest engineered product of imperialism. But this product, the soldier of imperialism has now turned rogue has now turned his back after the entire machinery which had historically created him. And now he has become a problem to the machinery which had created him and now the machinery has to get rid of him.

So, you can see how Heart of Darkness is such interesting and deep resonance with some of the geopolitical tensions we have in our world today, where you know great soldiers, you know great friends, great machinery, suddenly become rogue, suddenly become terrorists, and the entire ontology of terrorism the entire ontology of rogue agency is something which is very complex. Because what that often means is you create the system creates a body or a wing or an individual as for a particular purpose to defeat the enemy, etcetera. And then at some point historical time later subsequent to that point, they that particular individual that particular agency, that particular wing, it turns rogue, it turns its back on the system which had created it, and now it is and then it is branded as a terrorist wing.

So, the entire idea of terrorism and rogue agency is something which is obviously, a very geopolitically contingent. And *Heart of Darkness* seems to be one of the earlier novels which anticipates such geopolitical crisis right. So, we have this Belgian you know colony in Congo an outpost, and Kurtz happens to be you know this finest agent of the Empire, the Belgian Empire who is now ironically become a problem for the Empire has become a problem for the machinery, and so the machinery has to get rid of him.

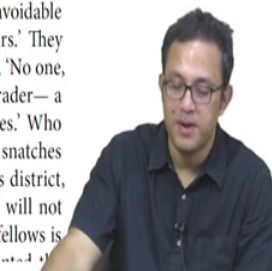
And if you take a look at the film based on this novel *Apocalypse Now* which is about the Vietnam War, American-Vietnam War there too colonial Kurtz was played by Marlon Brando, I think I mentioned it already. He becomes a rogue agent who has to be terminated, who has to be assassinated ok. So, this particular image is very you know telling and symbolic, the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters ok.

So, I did not know the motive. Perhaps he was just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for his own sake. His name, you understand, had not been pronounced once. He was that man. So, he becomes in a way Kurtz become the center in *Heart of Darkness*, but then once Marlow arrives in the center, he finds Kurtz to be a hollow man. And this is obviously, in connection to the hollowness of the center in *Heart of Darkness*, the centerlessness in *Heart of Darkness* as you would put it.

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who, as far as I could see, had conducted a difficult trip with great prudence and pluck, was invariably alluded to as 'that scoundrel.' The 'scoundrel' had reported that the 'man' had been very ill—had recovered imperfectly.... The two below me moved away then a few paces, and strolled back and forth at some little distance. I heard: 'Military post—doctor—two hundred miles—quite alone now— unavoidable delays—nine months—no news—strange rumours.' They approached again, just as the manager was saying, 'No one, as far as I know, unless a species of wandering trader— a pestilential fellow, snapping ivory from the natives.' Who was it they were talking about now? I gathered in snatches that this was some man supposed to be in Kurtz's district, and of whom the manager did not approve. 'We will not be free from unfair competition till one of these fellows is



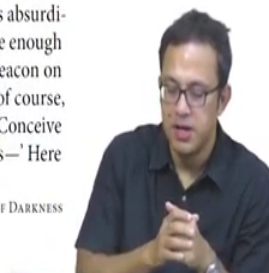
The half-caste, who, as far as I could see, had conducted a difficult trip with great prudence and pluck, was invariably alluded to as that scoundrel. The scoundrel had reported that a man had been very ill. So, we get reports that Kurtz have been very ill – had recovered imperfectly. The two below me moved away then a few paces, and strolled back and forth at the same distance. I heard; Military post – doctor – two hundred miles – quite alone now – unavoidable delays – nine months – no news – strange rumors.

So, look at again the randomness in information, and again among other things Heart of Darkness is also about the crisis of information. And you know as we know that information or the informative network or the economy of information is something which consolidated something which is central to the structure of imperialism. So, when that gets you know that becomes a crisis and obviously, the entire imperial machinery collapses.

So, if you do not get adequate information, if you do not get enough information on how on imperialism, the entire imperial machinery collapses. So, the randomness of information, I mean if you take a look at this phrase military post doctor – two hundred miles – quite alone now – unavoidable delays – nine months – no news – strange rumors, it is all non-interconnected right. So, this non-interconnected quality of information in Heart of Darkness is important for us to pick on and study ok.

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and of whom the manager did not approve. 'We will not be free from unfair competition till one of these fellows is hanged for an example,' he said. 'Certainly,' grunted the other; 'get him hanged! Why not? Anything—anything can be done in this country. That's what I say; nobody here, you understand, HERE, can endanger your position. And why? You stand the climate—you outlast them all. The danger is in Europe; but there before I left I took care to—' They moved off and whispered, then their voices rose again. 'The extraordinary series of delays is not my fault. I did my best.' The fat man sighed. 'Very sad.' And the pestiferous absurdity of his talk,' continued the other; 'he bothered me enough when he was here. 'Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing.' Conceive you—that ass! And he wants to be manager! No, it's—' Here



And then you know the whole idea of stations in imperialism becomes important. And this particular description of stations is telling because here Marlow is told that each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a center for trade of course but also for humanizing improving instructing right. So, again that is the ideal definition of colonial centers, that you know it should be the perfect center, the perfect relay station where things get better where things come in and move out right.

And then between the point of coming and between the point of arrival and the point of departure things should become significantly better right that is the whole idea of a center. And also this entire humanizing narrative; it should also become one of humanizing, improving and instructing ok.

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he got choked by excessive indignation, and I lifted my head the least bit. I was surprised to see how near they were—right under me. I could have spat upon their hats. They were looking on the ground, absorbed in thought. The manager was switching his leg with a slender twig; his sagacious relative lifted his head. 'You have been well since you came out this time?' he asked. The other gave a start. 'Who? I? Oh! Like a charm—like a charm. But the rest—oh, my goodness! All sick. They die so quick, too, that I haven't the time to send them out of the country—it's incredible!' 'Hm'm. Just so,' grunted the uncle. 'Ah! my boy, trust to this—I say, trust to this.' I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for a gesture that took in the forest, the creek, the mud, the river—seemed to beckon with a dishonouring flourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart. It was so startling that I leaped to my feet and looked back at the edge of the forest, as though I had expected an



And, that is the whole point that is the whole point of a center, the whole point of the colonial machinery that it that it's supposed to be efficient as well as humanizing in the first place and Heart of Darkness shows how the humanizing face goes away completely.

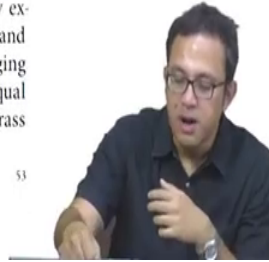
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er— seemed to beckon with a dishonouring hourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart. It was so startling that I leaped to my feet and looked back at the edge of the forest, as though I had expected an answer of some sort to that black display of confidence. You know the foolish notions that come to one sometimes. The high stillness confronted these two figures with its ominous patience, waiting for the passing away of a fantastic invasion.

“They swore aloud together—out of sheer fright, I believe—then pretending not to know anything of my existence, turned back to the station. The sun was low; and leaning forward side by side, they seemed to be tugging painfully uphill their two ridiculous shadows of unequal length, that trailed behind them slowly over the tall grass

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But also the efficiency face goes away completely, it becomes inefficient in a machinery and that is something which Heart of Darkness constantly foregrounds. And that foregrounding is of course, done through the whole process of narrative imperfection right.

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without bending a single blade.

‘In a few days the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver. Long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead. I know nothing as to the fate of the less valuable animals. They, no doubt, like the rest of us, found what they deserved. I did not inquire. I was then rather excited at the prospect of meeting Kurtz very soon. When I say very soon I mean it comparatively. It was just two months from the day we left the creek when we came to the bank below Kurtz’s station.

‘Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side



So, the idea that narrative becomes inadequate, uninformative, is also reflective how the inadequate and uninformative quality of imperialism in the first place. So, the narrative, a crisis in Heart of Darkness, and the narrative crisis in Marlow’s structure is reflective

in some sense of the existential and political crisis in Heart of Darkness that it does not quite work out the entire imperial station, station and machinery it does not quite work out and that delay, that interruption and information that the fact that it becomes you know informatively interruptive, so that interruptive quality it spills over in Marlow's storytelling as well.

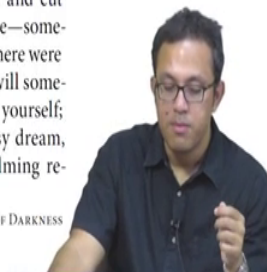
It constantly gets interrupted; it interrupts itself. So, it is designed to interrupt itself all the time. So, in that sense becomes very complex narrative strategy which is sort of designed to be self-interruptive right. So, self-destructive and self-interruptive, these qualities inform the narrative politics in Heart of Darkness consistently ok.

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est beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare for yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming re-

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HEART OF DARKNESS



Now, what I am going to spend some time on now is looking at how Marlow describes the entire journey down Congo, and again we see how the natural landscape gets blurred away quite interestingly, and what we get instead is the perception of the landscape, and this is what one of things you know Heart of Darkness does very well.

And in that sense, it is very modernist how the palpable known material reality becomes secondary, and what becomes primary what becomes foregrounded is the perception of the reality. So, the perception is mapped onto the reality. So, we get the perception first and only much later, once we navigate through the perceptions do we get to know what the real thing is right.

So, we get it we get a very blurry cryptic image of forests, of rivers, and natural landscapes. And what we what we get an overabundance we get an overload of sensory perceptions. So, perception is foregrounded in Heart of Darkness; the perception becomes more important than information that is a very short quick way to put it. So, perception becomes more important than information. So, the informative reality or the informative materiality in Heart of Darkness comes much later if it comes at all. What we get instead an overload of sensory perception that becomes an important thing for us to understand as readers.

Now, if we take a look at this description in Heart of Darkness, it becomes important, it becomes interesting for us, and that sort of grasp that captures the entire centerless quality of Marlow's experience, and the centerless quality of his narrative as well. And this is what Marlow describes the river as, and this should be on your screen.

Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world. It is almost like a temporal thing. So, again look at the way in which space and time are mapped onto each other, the river is a space, a physical space. But the journey along that river the journey down that river, it becomes a temporal journey, not so much a spatial journey, so that becomes a very complex blurring of spatial and temporal parameters. We cannot even make out where this spatial parameter ends, and the temporal parameter begins I mean it is like a same thing, it is like a stream of consciousness.

So, quite literally Congo in Heart of Darkness becomes the stream of consciousness ok. It is almost like a journey back in time the beginnings of the world. When vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. So, again look at the adjectives – warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There is no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side.

So, interestingly the only animals we see in Heart of Darkness, the hippos and alligators; we do not see other wild animals. So, again the material wildness of Africa, the physical wildness of Africa, it gets overshadowed by the perception of that wildness that becomes important. So, the only animals who appear in Heart of Darkness are almost apologies

for animals say hippos and alligators, and not the you know the center animals which we associated Africa with ok.

So, hippos and animals, a hippos and alligator, sorry sunned themselves side by side. So, there is a degree of sluggishness which is represented by the hippo image, and the alligator sunning themselves again becomes an image of sluggishness, not of movement, not of dynamism. It is everything decelerates, everything gets defamiliarized. It is deceleration defamiliarization, and this has been a very important qualities in Heart of Darkness especially the way the story is narrated to us.

The broadening water flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all way all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once – somewhere – far away – in another existence perhaps.

So, again this whole experience of being cut off being alienated from everything you had known once upon a time. So, that existential alienation becomes obviously a response in the material world around you, and that becomes part of the package of defamiliarization the fact that Marlow does not quite know everything around him changes sort of the world that he knows the reality he knows changes dramatically and drastically. And that becomes a defamiliarizing technique in Heart of Darkness, I mean the familiar world defamiliarizes it becomes strange. You feel alienated as an individual as a human subject in that fast and dramatically defamiliarizing world around you ok.

There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare for yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence.

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alities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect. I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it any more; I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel; I had to discern, mostly by inspiration, the signs of hidden banks; I watched for sunken stones; I was learning to clap my teeth smartly before my heart flew out, when I shaved by a fluke some infernal sly old snag that would have ripped the life out of the tin-pot steamboat and drowned all the pilgrims; I had to keep a lookout for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the night for next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey-tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your



So, there is a dreamlike quality in Heart of Darkness is important. So, and dream of course is an interesting phenomenon because a dream is a liminal location between reality and fantasies. A dream is when you dream instead of asleep as well as not quite asleep right. You are moving, you have a physical connect to a certain extent, just for instance you have a nightmare you sweat, you become disturbed at a very visceral level when you have a bad dream. So, dream is a liminal location between reality and unreality between consciousness and unconsciousness right. So, dream is a subconscious stage which becomes important ok.

So, the entire idea of dream becomes important, and how this dream informed the narrative politics in Heart of Darkness, because as I just mentioned it is a liminal location between conscious and unconscious and that liminality of the dream is important for us, because Marlow is inhabiting a liminal landscape why he does not quite know what is around him, at the same time he is unconscious; he is conscious where at the same time he is not aware what is happening around him. So, that that degree of grayness is very much there in Heart of Darkness ok.

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I had to keep a lookout for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the night for next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for—what is it? half-a-crown a tumble—'

'Try to be civil, Marlow,' growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself.

'I beg your pardon. I forgot the heartache which makes up the rest of the price. And indeed what does the price matter, if the trick be well done? You do your tricks very well. And I didn't do badly either, since I managed not to sink that steamboat on my first trip. It's a wonder to me yet. Imagine a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road. I sweated and shivered over that business con-



So, that that becomes an important thing, and that becomes something that Marlow is, obviously, grasping is struggling to grasp, struggling to navigate. So, navigation becomes interesting, because literally he is navigating his journey down the river the Congo River, but at the same time he is navigating with the world around him, the level of perception, the level of knowledge, the level of cognition. So, it is more it is a combination of cognitive navigation as well as physical navigation right, so that that combination is interesting, that is something we should pay some attention to ok.

So, text book talks about the metaphysical reality of this experience. And then he says and this should be on your screen. When you have to attend to things of that sort, the whole idea of not knowing what surround you that is all to the mere incidence of the surface, the reality – the reality, I tell you – fades. The inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily. So, again the whole idea of centerlessness becomes important; the inner truth is hidden it is concealed.

So, the centerlessness of the experience becomes important, it is concealed, it is not something which comes out you know on the surface. But I felt it all the same; I felt often this mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for – what is it? Half-a-crown a tumble.

So, again and this is something which is interesting because *Heart of Darkness* in that sense is quite resonant, it is quite interestingly located you know and dialogic with some of the PTSD narratives that we have today for instance. If you take a look at a novel like *Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers which is about the Iraq War. And it is about a US veteran coming back from the Iraq War, and finding the entire civilian life around him extremely strange, extremely uncanny.

So, in that sense Marlow, he is like a war veteran, he has come back from a war site. And he has turned it into a story of what happened in the war to a fellow civilians; but they cannot tell it, first of all he cannot capture in narrative what really happened to him. And, secondly, he has a very flippant and dismissive view of reality in western civilian space, because he has been to another space which is nonwestern, non-civilian in a western sense. And he has had he has internalized, he has consumed to certain extent, the uncanny quality of that landscape.

Now, he comes back to the civilian space, and he finds the entire business of making money, half-a-crown a tumble which is about making petty money through petty jobs. He finds the entire business of that very flippant, and very, very insignificant in quality. And this take on reality in a western sense or the western civilian sense, this very dismissive take is something which we had to pay some attention to as readers ok.

So, and then the only instance in the novel where there is a response from one of the listeners in *Heart of Darkness* is someone telling Marlow. Try to be civil, Marlow, growled a voice, and I knew that it was at least one listener awake besides himself.

So, we cut back through the story telling time, because we it is very temporally complicated and complex narrative as well because Marlow is obviously, going back in time to tell you the story of what happened to him in Congo. But then the present time in which story is happening is in London is in Thames, in a River in Thames called Nellie as we saw in the beginning of the novel. And then this is a very abrupt cut back into the time.

And this one voice which tells Marlow to be civil not to insult the Londoner's so much, not to insult the white civilization so much just because he has been to nonwhite space. You know he is being told try to be civil, Marlow, growled a voice, and I knew and I obviously, is a unnamed narrator, the meta narrator in *Heart of Darkness* as it were,

because of different levels in narration in Heart of Darkness is a Meta narrator who has listened to Marlow's story.

And then is Marlow is telling us the story and the narrator inside Marlow's story as well ok. So, the meta-narrator tells us there is another person awake, and I knew that there was at least one listener awake besides myself. So, at least one more guy is still up ok.

And the Marlow carries on with the cynicism. And the cynical quality of Marlow is interesting because that is obviously, connected to the exhausted masculinity that Marlow embodies right. So, it is exhausted, liquidated, imperiled masculinity that Marlow embodies. And all he can do is not being cynical; it is entire knowledge of imperialism, the entire glamour of imperialism, and the entire machinery of imperialism and instead of telling this person that I beg your pardon.

I forgot the heartache which makes up the rest of the price. And indeed what does the price matter, if the trick be well done? You do your tricks very well. And I did not do badly either, since I managed not to sink that steamboat on my first trip. It is a wonder to me yet. Imagine a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road. And I like this image a lot, this is the reason why I am picking on it.

Marlow is attempting to give you a civilian analogy right, an urban analogy of what happened to him in Congo. And this is almost funny dark humor, dark humorous analogy that he is offering at the moment. So, he is saying, let me try, let me attempt to give an idea of what I experienced in Congo when I was trying to sail a steamboat, not knowing not have any idea what I am navigating through, whether it is a forest or it is a whirlpool pool or it you know people are attacking us, or pelting us with stones, or it is a bold animal in the stream, I had no idea what the reality around me. And I somehow managed to not sink the boat, which is I think something of a miracle.

And then he is trying to capture that with an analogy or convey that with an analogy they are using urban markets and this is what he offers imagine a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road. So, if you are a Londoner, I am giving you a London urban marker. So, imagine, someone blindfolds you and asks you to drive a van on a bad road, and you manage to do it without crashing it, without hitting something. So, it was that kind of a miracle that I experienced in Heart of Darkness in Congo.

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siderably, I can tell you. After all, for a seaman, to scrape the bottom of the thing that's supposed to float all the time under his care is the unpardonable sin. No one may know of it, but you never forget the thump—eh? A blow on the very heart. You remember it, you dream of it, you wake up at night and think of it—years after—and go hot and cold all over. I don't pretend to say that steamboat floated all the time. More than once she had to wade for a bit, with twenty cannibals splashing around and pushing. We had enlisted some of these chaps on the way for a crew. Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. And, after all, they did not eat each other before my face: they had brought along a provision of hippo-meat which went rotten, and made the mystery of the wilderness stink in my nostrils. Phoo! I can sniff it now. I had the manager on board and three or four pilgrims with their staves— all complete. Sometimes we came upon a station close by the bank, clinging to the skirts of the unknown, and the white men rushing out of a tum

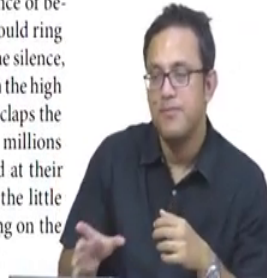


I sweated and shivered over that business considerably. I can tell you. After all for a seaman, to scrape the bottom of the thing that is supposed to float all the time under his care is the unpardonable sin. No one may know of it, but you never forget the thumb – eh? A blow on the very heart. You remember it, you dream of it, and you wake up at night and think of it – years after – and go hot and cold all over.

So, he is saying I am a professional seaman. And the worst feeling you can get is your vessel hitting a surface, hitting the bank, hitting a stone, and that the sound is almost visceral in quality. It, haunts you forever it keeps coming back to you all the time ok.

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cannibals—in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. And, after all, they did not eat each other before my face: they had brought along a provision of hippo-meat which went rotten, and made the mystery of the wilderness stink in my nostrils. Phoo! I can sniff it now. I had the manager on board and three or four pilgrims with their staves— all complete. Sometimes we came upon a station close by the bank, clinging to the skirts of the unknown, and the white men rushing out of a tumble-down hovel, with great gestures of joy and surprise and welcome, seemed very strange— had the appearance of being held there captive by a spell. The word ivory would ring in the air for a while—and on we went again into the silence, along empty reaches, round the still bends, between the high walls of our winding way, reverberating in hollow claps the ponderous beat of the stern-wheel. Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the



And now again, I just want to spend some time on the whole idea of imperialism, the whole signifier of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness* which in the case of Belgian imperialism in Congo is ivory, because the whole idea of Belgian imperialism in Congo was the ivory trade, the fact that it was trading on ivory. And of course, that was then shipped back in massive proportions, it is a massive business, and it was sold in a very high prices in Europe, and we saw then how the European domestic space is full of ivory.

So, the ivory is a domesticated Africa, ivory is Africa turned into something which is consumable, something which has a price tag to it, something which is a privilege possession of the white people right. So, in this way, Marlow this is how Marlow describes ivory over here.

The word ivory would ring in the air for a while – and on we went again into the silence, along empty reaches, around the still bends, between the high walls of our winding way, reverberating the hollow claps, reverberating in hollow claps the ponderous beat of the stern-wheel.

So, again the centerlessness of the imperial signifier is important to first understand. So, if we just hang in the air like a hollow word, the word ivory, it will ring there for a while, and then we forget about it, and move on, and you know we will just consume the

reverberations that will be around us all the time, the hollowness the hollow sounds, the hollow claps in the ponderous beat of the stern-wheel.

So, again even the acoustic politics in Heart of Darkness is that of hollowness it's not really solid sound, it is not really sound of something solid ringing on, it is something the lack of solidity, lack of scented quality in Heart of Darkness it spills over even in the acoustic frame right. So, even in the acoustic frame that Marlow inhabits the sound frame the soundscape so to say in Heart of Darkness that too has hollowness embedded in it; that becomes an important thing, ok.

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floor of a lofty portico. It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling. After all, if you were small, the grimy beetle crawled on—which was just what you wanted it to do. Where the pilgrims imagined it crawled to I don't know. To some place where they expected to get something, I bet! For me it crawled towards Kurtz—exclusively; but when the steam-pipes started leaking we crawled very slow. The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness; the wood-cutters slept, their fires burned low; the snapping of a twig would make you start. Were we wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied



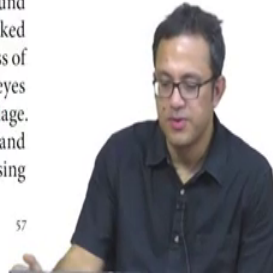
So, and that is something which you know Marlow describes over and over again right.

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tain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness; the wood-cutters slept, their fires burned low; the snapping of a twig would make you start. We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing

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And then of course, we see the whole idea of the steamer toiling on you know and that the whole idea of steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of the black and incomprehensible frenzy so right. So, the word frenzy is important is you know, in something of an irrational behavior. And so you know if we take a look at the adjectives in Heart of Darkness, especially the one's which we use to describe Congo, the very exotic adjectives of course, and that obviously, betrays the Eurocentric quality in Heart of Darkness and the racist quality in Heart of Darkness and it just completely essentializes Africa as a dark continent as something which cannot be known, cannot be comprehended, cannot be grasped with reality.

But at the same time what it also does in the Heart of Darkness is that it does not glamorize the European invasion, it does not glamorize the European territorialization. So, it becomes very deglamorized decadent exhausted description, an exhausted experience that is being you know foregrounded in Heart of Darkness ok.

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us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign— and no memories.

"The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a resonance to



So, and then of course, there is a degree of spectrality in the entire experience, and that spectrality the phantom quality comes back over and over again. And this is what Marlow says this should be on your screen. We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings. So, you know it is completely comprehensionless, there is no understanding of the reality around you, we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse right.

So, it is like a outbreak about to happen, it is about a madhouse about to break loose, and that becomes very important experience, that becomes a very important quality in Heart of Darkness. There is a degree of inertia, a degree of wait before madness begun, and everyone was waiting for that disruption to begin, everyone was waiting for the madness to begin, and that way it becomes an important temporal quality in Heart of Darkness.

So, the entire novel becomes a wait for something to happen, of course, nothing happens in Heart of Darkness you know Kurtz dies in the novel, Marlow comes back, nothing action packed takes place at all. But what exhausts Marlow in Heart of Darkness, what exhaust us as readers in Heart of Darkness is not the action-packed quality, it is a lack of action, it is an introspective quality.

You just keep getting bombarded with sensory perception, there is an overload of sensory perception that we get in Heart of Darkness, nothing happens, no activities take

place, no materiality emerges in solid signified thing, instead we get is a sensory perception, the overload of sensory perception which exhausts us as readers right. So, even reading Heart of Darkness, to a certain extent generates exhaustion, it produces exhaustion. And we as readers get exhausted reading this entire overload of sensory perception that Marlow offers us over and over again ok.

So, we could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were traveling in the night of the first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories right. So, it is almost like you are going back in time to a particular stretch of time that can have no memories. So, it looks like a prehistoric time, because you know if you correspond history with memory something which you remember, something which is factual, something which will have let us say the flag bearers of factuality signposts of factuality that stretch of time that quality of time is gone completely in Heart of Darkness.

And so what we have is this prehistoric time something which we see but can't quite comprehend, and that lack of comprehension in Heart of Darkness becomes an important quality ok. So, that is something which Heart of Darkness keeps foregrounding all the time ok.

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he lost sight of you, he became instantly the prey of an abject funk, and would let that cripple of a steamboat get the upper hand of him in a minute.

'I was looking down at the sounding-pole, and feeling much annoyed to see at each try a little more of it stick out of that river, when I saw my poleman give up on the business suddenly, and stretch himself flat on the deck, without even taking the trouble to haul his pole in. He kept hold on it though, and it trailed in the water. At the same time the fireman, whom I could also see below me, sat down abruptly before his furnace and ducked his head. I was amazed. Then I had to look at the river mighty quick, because there was a snag in the fairway. Sticks, little sticks, were flying about—thick: they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. All this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet—perfectly quiet. I could only hear the heavy splashing thump of the stern-wheel and the patter of these things. We cleared the snag clumsily. Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at! I stopped in order to close the shutter on the land-side.



Now, I am going to end this lecture today with this, with a little image, with a little session description that is important, because it directly corresponds to what I just talked

about delayed decoding and the whole idea of not knowing what is around you. So, this is the point in *Heart of Darkness* where Marlow's boat gets attacked by the people around the banks, and they started attacking Marlow's boat. But again look at the way in which Marlow describes it not knowing what actually took place. And interestingly, the confusion of Marlow, the cognitive confusion of Marlow which he had at that point of time is retained in the narrative that is the important thing.

So, Marlow, obviously, got to know what was attacking him later; obviously, got to know how the attack was made, but he does not bother to tell you that when he is telling the story.

So, he retains the original confusion, he retains the original cognitive crisis, and that becomes part of the narrative strategy in *Heart of Darkness*. So, this is the phrase, and this is a classic example in delayed decoding in *Heart of Darkness*, because then you know that tells us how the object, the material signifier comes much later, and what comes what becomes foregrounded, what is over abundant and rampant is sensory perception.

So, this is this should be on your screen, and this is how Marlow describes the entire experience. I had to look at the river mighty quick, because there was a snag in the fairway. Sticks, little sticks, were flying about – thick; they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. All this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet – perfectly quiet. I could only hear the heavy splashing thump of the stern-wheel and the patter of those things, these things. We cleared the snag clumsily.

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I had to look at the river mighty quick, because there was a snag in the fairway. Sticks, little sticks, were flying about—thick: they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. All this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet—perfectly quiet. I could only hear the heavy splashing thump of the stern-wheel and the patter of these things. We cleared the snag clumsily. Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at! I stepped in quickly to close the shutter on the landside. That fool-helmsman, his hands on the spokes, was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse. Confound him! And we were staggering within ten feet of the bank. I had to lean right out to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though a veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes— the bush was swarming with hu-

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Arrows, by Jove. We were being shot at. I stepped in quickly to close the shutter on the landside. That fool-helmsman, his hands on the spokes, was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse. Confound him. And we were staggering within ten feet of the bank. I had to lean right to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face among the leaves on the level of my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes – the bush was swarming with humans.

Now, what is interesting is that how the whole knowledge the fact that they were being attacked by arrows that comes much, much, much later and it is sensory perception the fact that they were being attacked, you know he finds, he first describes those as sticks. And he sees sticks all around him, he is surrounded by sticks, and there's a splash around him; and everything was quiet, it is just as arrows this rain of sticks coming at him, and only much later does he managed to decode what is actually happening. So, this is example of delayed decoding.

So, by delayed decoding, what Marlow does and what Conrad does obviously, as a writer is that he gives you the sensory perception, the cognitive confusion and only much later as you navigate through the confusion, do you get to know what actually is happening. So, this point when Marlow says arrows by Jove we are being shot at that is the arrival of

knowledge, arrival at knowledge. He arrives at the knowledge that we have been attacked by arrows. But look at the series of descriptions before that when he says sticks, little sticks, they were flying about – thick; they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. So, this is the only action scene in *Heart of Darkness* right.

And also I mean just look at the way in which this action scene is defamiliarized, and you know and delayed and decelerated before us. So, then everything happens in slowed motion right, and that again it is part of the cinematic quality in *Heart of Darkness* narration, the fact that it uses all these cinematic qualities like slow motion, magnification, panoramic shots, long shots, close up, everything all these cinematic techniques are used quite rampantly in *Heart of Darkness*.

So, and it is also a time when cinema was coming up. So, maybe Conrad did not do it deliberately, but it definitely has some resonances with some of the you know cinematic things that you know would come up, you know in due course of time. But you know this point and I am going to end with this lecture on this particular point, the whole idea of not knowing what is happening around you. And the whole idea of retaining that unknowability, to retain the cryptic quality of cognition is what makes *Heart of Darkness* a very complex narrative right.

So, it retains the confusion, it retains the original moment of confusion, it retains the original experience of confusion, it does not clear away the things and tell you later in retrospect what happens. So, it the same temporal quality of cognition is retained. So, Marlow first felt that there were sticks all around him; Marlow first felt there were showers around him, and only much later did he find out there were arrows. So, that temporal quality of first being confused, and then not confused, and then knowing what is actually happening that temporal swatches retained even a retrospective narration. He does not tell you right away those are arrows, and then tells you he felt like it. So, he gives you the feeling first just like he did, just like he experienced it, and that authenticity of experience something which *Heart of Darkness* does quite well. It maps the original experience into the retrospective narrative.

So, the original experience is mapped it is something which is foregrounded; it does not it does not get, it does not do away that at all. So, that originality of experience, the

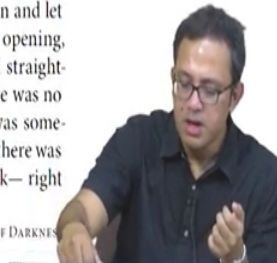
authentic original experience is mapped onto the retrospective narration which is something the Heart of Darkness does quite well. And then he says it gives a very graphic description of quote unquote African bodies, naked African bodies, and then he says it was a human limbs and movement glistening of bronze color.

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...the outstout under my feet, the pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters, and were simply squirting lead into that bush. A deuce of a lot of smoke came up and drove slowly forward. I swore at it. Now I couldn't see the ripple or the snag either. I stood in the doorway, peering, and the arrows came in swarms. They might have been poisoned, but they looked as though they wouldn't kill a cat. The bush began to howl. Our wood-cutters raised a warlike whoop; the report of a rifle just at my back deafened me. I glanced over my shoulder, and the pilot-house was yet full of noise and smoke when I made a dash at the wheel. The fool-nigger had dropped everything, to throw the shutter open and let off that Martini-Henry. He stood before the wide opening, glaring, and I yelled at him to come back, while I straightened the sudden twist out of that steamboat. There was no room to turn even if I had wanted to, the snag was somewhere very near ahead in that confounded smoke, there was no time to lose, so I just crowded her into the bank— right

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HEART OF DARKNESS



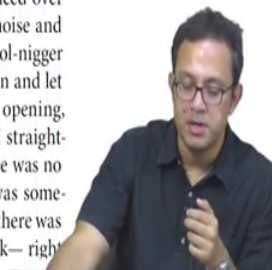
So, again these are very problematic descriptions, it is obviously, essentializing and commodifying, and reifying and objectifying the African body as any white man would at that point of time. But also what makes it interesting is the fact that he does not really look at the body as an evil body, he does not really look at the body as something which is completely you know evil or you know wicked completely. So, that evil quality the wicked quality is actually attributed to the white body, the white you know civilization as well.

The twigs shook, swayed, and rustled, the arrows flew out of them, and then the shutter came to. Steer her straight, I said to the helmsman. He held his head rigid, face forward; but his eyes rolled, he kept on lifting and setting down his feet gently, his mouth foamed a little. Keep quiet, I said in a fury. I might just as well have ordered a tree not to sway in the wind. I darted out. Below me there was a grave scuffle of feet on the iron deck; confused exclamations; a voice screamed. Can you turn back? I caught sight of V-shaped ripple on the water ahead. What? Another snag.

So, again look at the way in which everything gets confused a snag coming up, there is a whirlpool coming up, you can see a V-shaped thing coming up in a water which means it is either a whirlpool or snag. A fusillade burst out of my feet. The pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters. So, they started firing as well the white pilgrims, and were simply squirting lead into that bush. A deuce of a lot of smoke came up and drove slowly forward. I swore at it. Now, I could not see the ripple or the snag either. I stood in the doorway, peering, and the arrows came in swarms. So, they are constantly being shot at.

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screamed, 'Can you turn back?' I caught sight of a V-shaped ripple on the water ahead. What? Another snag! A fusillade burst out under my feet. The pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters, and were simply squirting lead into that bush. A deuce of a lot of smoke came up and drove slowly forward. I swore at it. Now I couldn't see the ripple or the snag either. I stood in the doorway, peering, and the arrows came in swarms. They might have been poisoned, but they looked as though they wouldn't kill a cat. The bush began to howl. Our wood-cutters raised a warlike whoop; the report of a rifle just at my back deafened me. I glanced over my shoulder, and the pilot-house was yet full of noise and smoke when I made a dash at the wheel. The fool-nigger had dropped everything, to throw the shutter open and let off that Martini-Henry. He stood before the wide opening, glaring, and I yelled at him to come back, while I straightened the sudden twist out of that steamboat. There was no room to turn even if I had wanted to, the snag was somewhere very near ahead in that confounded smoke, there was no time to lose, so I just crowded her into the bank— right



They might have been poisoned, but they looked as though they could not, they would not kill a cat. The bush began to howl. Our wood-cutters raised a warlike whoop; the report of a rifle just at my back deafened me. I glanced over my shoulder, and the pilot-house was yet full of noise and smoke when I made a dash at the wheel.

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into the bank, where I knew the water was deep.

'We tore slowly along the overhanging bushes in a whirl of broken twigs and flying leaves. The fusillade below stopped short, as I had foreseen it would when the squirts got empty. I threw my head back to a glinting whizz that traversed the pilot-house, in at one shutter-hole and out at the other. Looking past that mad helmsman, who was shaking the empty rifle and yelling at the shore, I saw vague forms of men running bent double, leaping, gliding, distinct, incomplete, evanescent. Something big appeared in the air before the shutter, the rifle went overboard, and the man stepped back swiftly, looked at me over his shoulder in an extraordinary, profound, familiar manner, and fell upon my feet. The side of his head hit the wheel twice, and the end of what appeared a long cane clattered round and landed over a little ways ahead. It looked as though after



So, you know the whole explanation, the whole activity over here is cryptic activities, is a confused activity, and that becomes very much a part of the experiential confusion in Heart of Darkness which informs the narrative confusion. And like I said the original confusion, the original moment of confusion, the original movement from confusion to knowledge that temporal structure is retained in the retrospective narration as well that's something which Heart of Darkness does.

So, the entire action-packed scene over here where Marlow steamer gets attacked by a bunch of arrows, by people around along the banks who start firing arrows them. It was described in very graphic and sensory details, and also very cryptic condition, very cryptic cognitive condition, which prevents us from knowing what is really happening. So, that original moment of Marlow not knowing is shared with us as readers as well.

So, we as readers, we feel as though we are on the boat as well because we do not quite know what is happening as well, so that that immersive quality in Heart of Darkness is important. And then I am going to end the lecture here at this point. So, it becomes immersive, and that immersive quality is achieved through a process of dramatic defamiliarization.

So, everything is defamiliarized, everything is decelerated, everything slows down, and hence deceleration. And that delayed decoding the fact that you cannot decode what is happening around you that gives that contributes or that generates the immersive quality

in Heart of Darkness narration. So, I stop at this point today, I will conclude this text in the next lectures to come.

Thank you for your attention.