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# UNIT 4 RACE, EMPIRE, GENDER IN HEART OF DARKNESS

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## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The primary aim in this unit is to analyse some characters in the novella keeping in view the main issues of race, gender and empire. For Conrad questions of race are inextricable from those of empire. Since the novelist uses characters and puts them in situations to reveal their and his own way of looking at reality, we can now begin looking at some of the characters.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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From the discussion in the previous units, it may have become clear to you how Conrad was wary of exposing himself too much for fear of being rejected by a majority of his English readers. You have also noticed how cleverly and ironically he used many of the conventional ideas and techniques, giving the impression to the undiscerning contemporary public of being a conformist. Little did they suspect that Conrad was subverting the basic literary and political assumptions of his times. This subtle strategy may have prompted some early critics of *Heart of Darkness* to accept the work as complicit. "It must not be supposed that Mr. Conrad makes attack upon colonisation, expansion, even upon Imperialism" said a contemporary reviewer. But Edward Garnett, having been a close associate of Conrad's, was one of the earliest critics to recognise the subversive nature of the Conrad text: He called it "a page torn from the life of the Dark Continent—a page which has been hitherto carefully blurred and kept away from European eyes".

This kind of difference of opinion on the political implications of *Heart of Darkness* in the general context of Conrad's politics remains divided to this day. For example, some postcolonial critics think that Conrad was a racist, and supported the empire. "Conrad is a bloody racist", Chinua Achebe, would say in 1977 in the *Massachusetts Review*, though he was later to tone down his attack somewhat. On the other hand, another writer from the same continent, Ezekiel Mphahlele would declare that Conrad was one of the few "outstanding white novelists who portray competently characters belonging to cultural groups outside their own" (*The African Image*, p. 125).

If I were to single out one factor which accounts for such discrepancy, I would point to the portrayal of the character of Kurtz. Ascertaining Conrad's attitude towards imperialism will be guided to a great extent by the reader's understanding of Kurtz's

character. Similarly, since Marlow uses racist language and also makes snide remarks about women in the novella, the reader's understanding of Conrad's attitude to the questions of race and gender also gets affected by how they look at the Conrad-Marlow relationship. That he was conscious about the racial question becomes evident from what he once wrote to a French correspondent—that *Heart of Darkness* was, among other things, a study of racial difference (*Letters*). For him the two issues of race and empire were interrelated.

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## 4.2 KIPLING'S SQUINT

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From your study of some other political fictions, you may have formed some idea about what constituted the standard English attitudes towards the Empire. You of course know that none was more representative than Kipling's notion of the white man's burden, his imperialistic rhetoric and exhortation. The most famous of Kiplingesque bombast is his poem on "The White Man's Burden", beginning:

Take up the White Man's burden  
Send forth the best ye breed  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need....

This was published the same year as Conrad's novella, that is, in 1899. The "Exiles' Line" with its references to the "chain gangs" also sings of the "wheel of Empire" (empire in upper case).

It is safe to assume that Conrad was familiar with all these. But for tactical reasons he would seldom come out in the open in English papers; not even in his letters to friends unless through oblique references. He made a casually contorted reference to "the folly of nations", or to Kipling's "squint", in the context of the Boer war in South Africa. But the farthest he could go on the subject was in a letter to Graham Cunningham :

The whole business is inexpressibly stupid—even on general principles: for, evidently a war should be a conclusive proceeding, this noble enterprise (no matter what its first result) must be the beginning of an endless contest. It is always unwise to begin war, which, to be effective, must be a war of extermination: it is positively imbecile to start it without a clear notion of what it means and to force on questions for immediate solution which are eminently fit to be left to time.... There is an appalling fatuity in this business. If I am to believe in Kipling this is a war undertaken for the cause of democracy.... However, now the fun has commenced, I trust British successes will be crushing from the first,—on the same principle that if there's murder being done in the next room and you can't stop it, you wish the head of the victim to be bashed in forthwith and the whole thing over for the sake of your feelings.

The cutting irony here is obviously whetted by a kind of subterranean anger. Once the intention is wrong the method is not important. Like Marlow, who would retort to the station manager's complaint against Kurtz's method, Conrad's answer to the European enterprise in Africa would have been: "No method at all". So it is not as if Conrad here in the letter is supportive of the British method of committing murder.

## 4.3 RACE

### 4.3.1 The Europeans

#### Fresleven:

Do you remember this man? It would not surprise me at all if your answer is no, lost as you may have been in the maze of Marlow's narrative. Yet he is integral to the foregrounding that Conrad so consciously provides in the beginning. Let us examine briefly his role in the narrative.

Conrad takes care to specify Fresleven's race and nationality, and of course his gender (only males can serve the empire in practical terms; but we must return to this point in a later section on gender). This Dane is dead even before Marlow's central narrative begins. As a matter of fact, it is his death which provides Marlow with the opportunity of fulfilling his childhood dream. This dream however which turns into a nightmare towards the end of his narrative, where he talks about the choice of nightmares, is another, though not unrelated, matter. Fresleven, yet another European, supposedly superior, another agent of the imperial forces, dies under the silliest of circumstances: a fight over two black hens—not unlike the quarrel over the sugar between Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost of Progress". The black and white symbolism in the novella, apart from its usual manichean purpose, is crucial to our understanding of the racial difference Conrad speaks of. He deliberately uses the racist language of the day; anything else would have been unnatural for the Englishman, Marlow. Do the two black hens stand for black women? Perhaps not. Conrad's irony in that case loses force. A member of the superior race, a civilizer of the savages could pick up a quarrel and batter the chief of the village; and he was "the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs". He went out of his head because he was out there for two years "in the noble cause". Finally the blacks kill him.

Since we live in the postmodernist times when brackets, hyphens, and quotes are part of our linguistic weaponry, we feel tempted to put the phrase "noble cause" within quotes. Conrad is subtler; he expects the irony to work on its own. Marlow, now the wise narrator tells us that "I should think the cause of progress got [the hens], anyhow". Don't you think that at this stage the hens assume greater significance than their status as mere fowls? The implication seems to be that the "cause of progress" smells "foul".

Conrad portrays quite a few representatives from diverse European nationalities, all of whom contribute to the civilising mission. The accountant has no accounts to keep; the station manager has hardly anything to do except for gossiping. The doctor glorifies the company, sends out people by examining them and clearing them; he also carries out observations in the interest of science (he too is an apostle of progress albeit of science). But he himself is clever enough not to keep out of the actual business. There was no "madness in his family".

### 4.3.2 Marlow Again And Kurtz

You have already been given some idea about Marlow, the persona/mask of Conrad's. As we have seen, he embarks on the journey to the dark corner after a period of stasis. He has had what he calls "a regular dose of the east". He seems to have been influenced by his sojourn there, as is evident from his reference to being charmed by the snake (a reversal of the Indian cultural code: snake-charming). We are also constantly reminded of his Buddha-like posture and propensity to meditate. Next, we are told about his childhood passion for maps, and how his original intention was to go to the great river: "I felt somehow I must get there by hook or by crook." He would soon, when on the journey, talk about "the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder". This fascination is perhaps what he had already referred to as the "fascination of the abomination" that every explorer has. That the symbolism points inevitably towards a Dantesque hell, towards sin and evil there is no doubt, with numerous references to hell, snake, Mephistopheles, the

forked beard, flies to suggest that Beelzebub was around, darkness, bottom, below etc. (Mephistopheles and Beelzebub are the names of the chief devils). Kurtz, when he is introduced, is said to be out there: "the very *bottom* of there" (my italics). He is the prince of darkness. There seems to be in the title an allusion to the Miltonic phrase, "darkness visible". And Marlow's journey into the dark place of the earth inevitably leads him towards Kurtz, even though he is initially reluctant to admit it. By the end of Part I he says: "I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very interested in him. No". But then he adds: "Still I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, could climb to the top after all and how he would set about his work when there". Later he would say, "we crept on, towards Kurtz". Again, "Sometimes I would pick out a tree a little way ahead to measure our progress towards Kurtz..." again, he says "For me it crawled towards Kurtz—exclusively". In the third part, Marlow is obsessed with Kurtz, though he continues to say that "Mr Kurtz was no idol of mine". For most of his narrative from now on is focused on him. After all, as he had said earlier, he was the man "who is so indissolubly connected with the memories of that time". In spite of his inexplicable attraction towards Kurtz, Kurtz is what Marlow just falls short of becoming. Recall how Marlow boasts that he doesn't tell a lie; and yet, tells more than the biggest lie of all to the Intended. Similarly, the frame narrator says about Marlow even as Marlow "no more to us than a voice" says the same thing about Kurtz. But his stopping short, holding back is symbolically represented by his act of throwing away his predecessor's blood-soaked shoes.

To me Kurtz is a familiar compound ghost: he is an amalgam of Livingstone, Stanley ("he had discovered lots of villages, a lake too", we are told), Klein, Leopold II (a politician), Conrad, but most of all Kipling (eloquence). I arrive at the conclusion by looking at all the attributes conferred on Kurtz by various characters. Can you make a list?

"Kurtz" is Russian for "short", whereas Kurtz was tall, "looked at least seven feet long". Mark how Conrad describes him here; one does not say "long" for a man, but for an animal such as a snake. He is prostrate. So he is seven feet *long* not tall. Secondly, Marlow says "Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life—and death". Thus, his physique too gave the lie to him. This discrepancy between appearance and reality would receive its ironical echo in the words of the Intended about Kurtz: "He died as he lived". Only Marlow and his listeners know how right and wrong she was; Kurtz's life was a sham, a hypocritical mask. But his death completely unmasked him. She was also right because Kurtz relived the life of deceit and hypocrisy, "desire, temptation, and surrender" "during that supreme moment of complete knowledge".

### 4.3.3 The Natives

- (1) Feel considerably in doubt about the future. Think just now that my life amongst the people (white) around here cannot be very comfortable. Intend avoid acquaintance as much as possible.
- (2) Prominent characteristic of the social life here: people speaking ill of each other.

Conrad, Entries in the Congo Diary

Achebe asserted that "Heart of Darkness" depicts Africa as a "place of negations....in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will manifest." The Africans, according to her, are degraded and dehumanised, and are represented either as a howling or wailing mob or as grotesques. They are denied speech, or are granted speech only to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Africa is presented as a "setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognisable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his own peril." Does your reading of the book tally with this view?

I think the crucial portions of the text in this regard are those where the chain gang, and the other Africans are presented as "criminals", "enemies", "workers", and finally

"rebels". There were also the "cannibals". Marlow wonders why the latter did not eat the white men. "Restraint" is the answer. They had restraint, whereas Kurtz and the other whites had none. This is the crucial difference, Marlow thinks. Also note the difference in Conrad's portrayal of the Europeans and their treatment of the Africans. It is significant that Marlow, while narrating how he got the job uses a cliché: "I stepped into [Fresleven's] shoes". He doesn't take them off until much later in the narrative. Like Marlow who often withholds information, or realises the significance of what exactly he sees or hears, Conrad expects us to make connections between distant incidents. From being a mere metaphor at this stage, the shoes become symbols when they get soaked in blood, the blood of "imperial mission." Stepping into the shoes of his predecessor would perhaps mean what Marlow repeats from time to time, namely, that he too becomes albeit unwittingly drawn into the mission. This "poor predecessor" of his, we are told later, had educated the native helmsman in Marlow's steamer, which was crawling towards Kurtz. When he dies from a spear wound (a consequence of being a willing agent of the mission) "My shoes were full"; of what Marlow does not say, but leaves little to our imagination. They are full of blood. "To tell you the truth I was morbidly anxious to change my shoes and socks." Then he says, "I flung one shoe overboard, and became aware that that was exactly what I had been looking forward to..." The evasive technique is used to a striking effect. What he is "looking forward to", is a meeting with Kurtz. But the first impression sticks. Through their manner of juxtaposition, the shoes and Kurtz become indistinguishable. Kurtz's hands too are bloodied. Marlow feels suddenly guilty of complicity. Any doubt we might still have about Conrad's tropes at this juncture is removed when the same identification is repeated through deliberate ambiguity. When the second shoe vanishes into the water, Marlow exclaims: "By Jove! It's all over....he has vanished—the gift has vanished, by means of a spear, arrow, or club...." But the shoes become shoes again through Conrad's own brand of defamiliarisation. "My dear boys, what can you expect from a man who out of sheer nervousness had just flung overboard a pair of new shoes!"

The other crucial point where Conrad seems to be passing an ironic stricture on the civilising work occurs when he describes the chain gang and the "shadows". Kipling is easily identified as one of the targets. It is true that Conrad describes the natives as subhuman, as Achebe complains; but the white imperialists are treated as inhuman, to say the least. As Marlow goes on to build a contrast between the civilisation he was coming from and the place of his sojourn he says that the earth was unearthly; and is about to say that the men were inhuman. But he stops short, and says, proleptically as usual: "...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". Then he says even more with one of the rare redeeming moments of sensitivity verging on the sentimental: "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". Now we can't be too sure about the latter part of his assertion. It is much later that we realise the contrast between the humanity of these "savages", and the inhumanity of the "civilised people".

After the description of the natives as shadows, even animals (because of the way in which the work of progress is being carried out), Marlow meets a white man: "I shook hands with this miracle"; and he says he mistook him to be a sort of vision. But soon he would think "his appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy". As part of the mission, no doubt, Marlow reports ironically, the dummy had been "teaching one of the native women about the station. It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work." Thus this man had verily accomplished something. And he was devoted to his books, which were in apple-pie order". The implied sexual perversions of Kurtz are thus foreshadowed in this man's "teaching". In the name of educating her, what he had done was to "keep" her and exploit her by getting his work done. For his answer was to Marlow's question as to how he could dress so immaculately.

### 4.4.1 The Women (White)

If Achebe saw the Africans as marginalized and demeaningly stereotyped, various feminist critics felt that the tale similarly belittled women. Nina Pelikan Straus, Bette London, Johanna M. Smith, and Elaine Showalter are among those who claimed that *Heart of Darkness* was not only imperialist but also "sexist". Straus declared that male critics had repeatedly become accomplices of Marlow, who "brings truth to men by virtue of his bringing falsehood to women". We will take up these objections and look at the scenes involving women; but first some general remarks. Meanwhile, it would be useful if you make a roster of women characters and the role they play in the tale.

The usual feminist objection to adventure stories is that adventures and voyages are the domain of men, for men and by men. Stories of empire, are not free from similar charges. In Forster's *A Passage to India* too, the refrain goes, women are not so much active participants in the upkeep of the empire but are fringe, decorative figures. Mrs. Moore wants to know the real India; Adela is here as the fiancée of Ronny Heaslop. In Conrad too, the empire is the upkeep of tough men; and empire is an on-the-spot job. But the first thing that occurs to me about the Conrad narrative we are presently dealing with, is that here women also are made a party to the imperial enterprise. Undoubtedly, in the primeval, Darwinian world only the fittest survive. And who are the "fittest"? We notice, from beginning to the end, one after the other the rapacious seekers of fortune either lose their heads or die, or kill each other. This happens in the earlier tale too "An Outpost of Progress". This has a historical basis in the patriarchal western world. But Conrad does not necessarily subscribe to the view. Women, for him, are not culpable. They are not only not mere tools in the hands of men; they have influence over men. Marlow, apparently sexist, nonetheless has to depend on an influential woman relative: "Then—would you believe it?—I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work—to get a job". But by now we have learnt how Conrad keeps his distance from Marlow, only occasionally do their voices merge.

Conrad, however, seems to be playing to the gallery occasionally with his casual, sham-casual, flippant remarks on women. After all his contemporary readership expected boys'/men's adventures. At the same time women, if present, were there only to heighten the romance. He had written to his publisher: "It is a story of the Congo. There is no love in it and no woman—only incidentally." Let us read a passage from the text alongside this, and try to see if any connection can be established.

They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and can never be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over.

He returns to the subject much later in the tale when he accidentally let slip the word "girl". "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it—completely. They—the women I mean—are out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse. Oh, she had to be out of it." But then he would devote the last part of the story to a woman, to which we shall come presently. Even when he goes for the interview for the job he encounters two women, who are knitting black wool. The symbolism here is not quite obvious; we might think that they are Dame Fortune. The old lady "seemed uncanny and fateful!... Old knitter of black wool." Marlow cannot forget them. Men are playthings in their hands. They have uncanny power over them.

The other woman in the tale is an oil painting by Kurtz himself that Marlow had seen at the Central Station. This woman was reminiscent of Marlow's dialogue with his aunt, about the workers being the emissary of light. For the woman was "draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch".

#### 4.4.2 The Women (African)

How are the African women portrayed in the tale? What kind of impact did the emissaries of light make on them? How does Conrad look at the "work" through Marlow? If you discount the metaphorical reading of the two black hens, the native women of Africa are first represented through the woman who was "taught" by the accountant. "It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work". The most imposing figure among these is of course the woman who was close to Kurtz in the Inner Station. The "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman", who "walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed clothes, treading the earth proudly...." What does she stand for? She was one of the adorers of Kurtz, who did not want him to be taken away. She was as faithful to Kurtz as the Intended was. She is described by Marlow in very ambiguous terms. She is both "barbarous" and "superb"; "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent—

Do you think Conrad meant to project/delineate her as a "character", in the way characters are realistically portrayed? To my mind, she is more a symbolic figure; and it would be somehow wrong to take her as a partial depiction of "the savage woman". She is a symbol; a counterpoint to the white women or the Intended. If the likes of Kurtz are the emissaries of "progress" she is a grotesque manifestation of that progress. I feel that Conrad meant us to catch the pun on the clause: "[T]here was something ominous and stately in her deliberate *progress*" (my emphasis). More explicitly she is described as "the image of [the wilderness's] own tenebrous and passionate soul". A less favourable but not less plausible reading might be to see her as evil incarnate. This will mean that it was by her that Kurtz was swallowed up; and distanced from her, he can realise the horror of the wilderness. She would then become a symbol of metaphysical evil that the dark continent held: its ivory, its fatal attraction. Not that Africa was inherently evil. But it is that aspect of Africa which lured the rapacious European in the name of progress into the depths of evil. No wonder this woman had the "value of several elephant tusks upon her." Yet there is something deeply ambiguous about her, something that cannot be simply described as plain or metaphysical evil. She is Africa to whom "civilisation" has done grievous wrong; hence her tragic and angry aspect: "She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us. Her long shadow fell to the water edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir, and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose." When her dying God is being carried away, "She stood looking at us without a stir, and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose." Later, in their final separation, "she put out her hands...." Marlow would remember this sight; during his meeting with the Intended. She would reappear as "a tragic and familiar Shade [the Intended]" with the same posture, "bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms...." Thus in the novella the distinction between black and white is not one of pigmentation. As Eloise Knapp Hay has reminded us, for Conrad, "'race' meant 'nation' more than 'pigmentation'". It will be this dark victim of Imperialism who will strike back at the empire in the form of writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

#### 4.4.3 The Woman (The Intended)

Once Conrad wrote to a correspondent about the importance of the last pages of the novella, "where the interview of the man and the girl locks in...the whole 30,000 words of narrative description into one suggestive view of a whole phase of life, and makes of that story something quite on another plane than an anecdote of a man who went mad in the Centre of Africa." In fact, the story is on another plane more than an indictment of European imperialism in Africa. I think what Conrad explores through Marlow's explorations of Africa and through Kurtz, are the depths of metaphysical evil of which it is impossible to speak in plain language. Had his intentions been merely political and not the very psychology of evil, he would have been satisfied with what he had done in "An Outpost of Progress". This is perhaps what he meant when he said that the subject of *Heart of Darkness*, though of his times, was not "topically treated". The tale, he further

said, was "less concentrated upon individuals". So there is really no point in complaining about the characters in the story being partial, incomplete or this "-ist" or that "-ist".

So it is significant, but not, to my mind at least, a sign of Conrad's attempt to marginalise women, that the Intended has no name, like most other characters in the tale.

We notice Kurtz referring to her as a possession: she is clubbed along with some material possessions "my ivory", "my station", "my Intended", "my career" .... "Everything belonged to him". When Kurtz dies, Marlow goes looking for her. The reasons he cites are two. One is curiosity, the other is his desire to "give [his memory and his Intended] up, too, to the past". But no sooner had he mentioned the girl than he would say, "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it—completely. They—the women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse." This seems to be by far the most controversial judgement on women; and feminists have thirsted for Conrad's blood on account of this "incriminating evidence". But if we remind ourselves of a comment of Marlow in another tale, *Chance*, we shall simply be flabbergasted. For he says there that women see "the whole truth", whereas men live in a "fool's paradise". As for Conrad himself, he would write to the then British Prime Minister advocating voting rights for women. So much for his misogyny!

The figure of another woman hovers briefly, and inconspicuously in Marlow's tale, that of Kurtz's mother, though only at her death. She is reported to have been watched over by the Intended. What do you make of this minor detail?

Marlow, does not accept the view that Kurtz's experience in the Congo, that is, that which is believed to have been his experience by his worldly-wise employers, will be of any use to Europe's future action. Yet since he is partially swathed by its "shadow" he would carry it with him. The memory of Kurtz himself is now a living shadow: "He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had lived—a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities [the horror! The horror!]; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence." It is this vision that he carries into the lady's house. It is this pall that covers the white lady, her house, everything into darkness. Into the lady's house with him goes the sound of savage drums, like the heartbeats "of a conquering darkness." In spite of the darkness, the wilderness is vibrantly alive and throbbing, while in her "radiance," the lady inhabits a "sarcophagus [a decorative, marble tomb]". She is a "familiar shade," recalling Dido in Virgil's underworld (In his epic poem *Aeneid*, the Roman poet Virgil recounts how Dido the queen of Carthage killed herself when abandoned by Aeneas). And it is her Europe that is the underworld. Marlow's interview with Kurtz's Intended, like everything in the story, verges on the allegorical, but the profound suggestiveness is the culmination of Conrad's symbolist method. In his description of the meeting, for the first time after the opening paragraphs, Marlow collapses the time frames. It is only now that we realise why Marlow could think of two thousand years ago as yesterday. "I saw her and him in the same instant of time—his death and her sorrow—I saw her sorrow in the very moment of his death" though it "was more than a year since the news came". The simultaneity of his two experiences is emphasised in the way he says he hears her say, "I have survived", which is indistinguishable from Marlow's last cry of metaphysical anguish. Thus the woman is carried to another plane. She is a living picture of Kurtz's painting. In the painting the background was sombre; the lady was blindfolded. Here too Marlow discerns the enveloping darkness in spite of the white marble. Her ignorance is monumental. She cannot see the reality of Kurtz; his hollowness. It is for this reason that every word she says about Kurtz is true, but only in their deeper ironies. She is one more European who has "constructed" Kurtz. But in the end, the woman becomes a tool in the hands of Conrad to wrap up the significance of Marlow's experience. The torch of the civilising mission continues to be passed on from generation to generation. She stands for "us", Europe, and "the world". This seems to be the meaning of her regret: Kurtz' death is a loss "to me" "to us", and, finally, "to the world". By giving her a name Conrad would have found it difficult to make her such a rich symbolic figure.



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## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

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Thus what we have just seen is that like most modernist texts *Heart of Darkness* anticipates our objections and resists reductive analyses. This is not to say that Conrad is politically correct. He could not have escaped the prejudices of his times in matters of ideology; but he was certainly breaking new ground, offering acute critiques of political discourse and adventurism. We know of some policy makers who were influenced by Conrad's views on the Congo.

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## 4.6 QUESTIONS

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1. What do you understand by the term ideology? Have you read any marxist literary critics? How is Jameson's criticism of Conrad's politics relevant to *Heart of Darkness*?
2. Conrad thinks, by implication, at least or what he says, that empire and race are inseparable categories? Would you agree with reference to your reading of *Heart of Darkness*?
3. What is Marlow's ideological position?

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## 4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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