A2 HoD Seminar #2

Absent: Alex Gruber, Eli Proffitt, Jake Wermes, Sam Waldbillig, Andrew Smith

Eble shared his questions

Harrison: What’s the deal with the cannibals?

* TJ: Why didn’t they eat them?
* Aiden: 3-1 ratio (6-1 ratio)… they brought hippo meat. Shared a connection to *Django Unchained*. Shared Marlow’s opinions—which are the same as the others.
* Eble: How so?
* Aiden: He feels bad for them… when they’re in another state, he’s shocked.
* Eble read from the text
* Zane: Shows how he’s out of place…
* Chase: Out of place…
* Harrison: Presents him as an animal, like the black men rowing.

Eble: Can we lump Marlow with the other colonials / whites in Africa?

* Logan: Death of helmsman… somewhat of a connection, but has a separation—they’re still animals.
* Aiden: Easier to accept that they’re still animals. Shared a farm anecdote with slaughter… psychological coping with death. He has to see them as humans…
* Eble: So… does Marlow share any kinship with them?
* Aiden: The helmsman… shitty helmsman, but Marlow feels sorry for him.
* Zane: It hits him afterwards…page 120. “Absurd…” Read from the text
* Eble tries to put it in context: Marlow watches a man die…
* Logan shares an anecdote about a man dying…
* Eble read from the text… how would a modern psychologist diagnose him?
* Zane: Panic attack…
* Logan: PTSD—flashes back to how he might have acted…
* Aiden: Bipolar?

Eble: What other evidence do we get that shows that he was struck to the core?

* Harrison: African man died after he tried to give him a biscuit. Experience with the natives struck him.
* Zane: Culmination of all experiences… man shot in head, cannibals with hippo meat… helmsman dies, he snaps…
* Aiden: Seeing natives as livestock…

Logan: Are the cannibals actually cannibals?

* Zane: Catching people / eating them?
* Aiden: Ate some of the dead?
* TJ: Threw the body overboard…
* Logan: Didn’t seem very clear.
* Eble: Hunger, its effects on people?
* Aiden: He talked about the cannibals revealing their hunger… rotten hippo meat being thrown overboard…
* TJ: Quote about hunger… no fear standing up to hunger…
* Harrison read from page 113.
* Eble talked about the natives / cannibals not gratifying their desires, read from page 112. Started a contrast between the cannibals restraining themselves and the Europeans *not* restraining themselves.
* Aiden: Spoke of *The Walking Dead*, the governor… some people are built to thrive… Europeans aren’t fit for the heart of darkness; when they get there, they immediately don’t have the built-in restraint, sense of civilization when things are shit.
* Logan: Ironic that the savages are more civilized than the Europeans.
* Eble: Talked about that irony…
* Aiden: Europeans *are* different than the Africans. Marlow talks about the area around them being an untamed beast.
* Eble: So where do we see that? (Went to the main question about the environment…)
* Zane: The fog whispers…
* Harrison: The trees were kings…
* Logan: Marlow still has these perceptions of Africa as an enigma—that fog still obscures it.
* Aiden: Funny with the manager, the central station… made a claim about him being flamboyantly gay… discussed him clapping his hands together…
* Eble: Connected with hairdresser’s dummy…
* Aiden: Compared Marlow to Mr. Ward… when he’s forced to deal with these situations with effeminate men who are more powerful than him, having to watch people die in front of him…

Eble read from 104-106. How is the wilderness typified there?

* Logan: Like another planet… “the earth seemed unearthly.” Very alien to what they’re used to…
* Aiden: In a way, kind of like he was describing the jungle protecting the native people… the roar of drums…flickers of light from dances and ceremonies, but couldn’t get to them from the river. Natives attacked the steamboat later on. Europeans whip out their guns, “squirt” lead. Shared Marlow’s description… like early guerilla warfare… much like the forest in *Lord of the Flies*… truth is like Beezlebub. Instead of physical death, he’s psychologically killed
* TJ challenged on *LotF* plot point.
* Aiden clarified.
* Eble talked.
* SILENCE…
* Logan: Leaping, screaming…familiarity. Read from the text… 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 response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you -- you so remote from the night of first ages -- could comprehend. And why not?
* Eble: Any thoughts? Is this crap?
* Logan: I think there is… connection to *Walking Dead*. What happens when that veil goes away? Do we revert back to that? We’re very close to 7,000 B.C. with a computer shutdown. Teaching shows how we go back to being cavemen.
* Zane: On 116… quote about “quiet” before the attack.
* Eble: Is there a value to such quiet?
* Zane: Yes… if you can reflect…

TJ: Kurtz will be like John Voigt in *Anaconda*

* Harrison: Kurtz will be like Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*…
* Eble: All evidence in the film pointed towards him being what kind of man?
* Harrison: Same thing...
* TJ: The book…

SEMINAR CONTINUATION: November 10, 2014

Absent: TJ, Eli, Chase (Field trip); Aiden, Logan (reasons unknown)

New question: **Is *Heart of Darkness* a racist text?**

Gruber started with the new question. I would say that I don’t think it’s a racist text; it just provides insight on / tries to assimilate what happened, plays out a scenario that happened.

* Smith: Conrad isn’t racist; he’s not trying to make it racist. Actions by the Europeans are. Same as *King Leopold’s Ghost*. In that time, what they were doing was accepted, wasn’t out of the ordinary. Wasn’t like Hitler.
* Zane: Important to look at the time period. Then, it was considered depressing… tough to bring attention to the indignities. Now, we can see this as racist. Back then, it was anti-slavery.
* Sam Waldbillig: *KLG*…nobody knew what they were doing. People were taken aback by that.
* Andrew Smith: Ruthless rulers… then, it was powerful (Eble challenged…). Someone who doesn’t care about other humans.
* Eble challenged. Not as many people doing ruthless things?
* Smith: The king of a place… not a group, government.
* Gruber: Superpowers of the world back then—America, England, European powers… leaders like King Leopold. Now, America, many of the same countries don’t have oppressive leaders. Smaller countries still have them.
* Jake Wermes: Smith was trying to say—I think it was like the frontier. You can’t do that.
* Eble: So… governments would
* Jake Wermes: Economic versus political power. Kurtz… set up dominion… cultural impact.
* Eble: Didn’t Kurtz plunder the ivory?
* Jake Wermes: He went past that… what Smith said—it’s worse than now.
* Gruber: Happens now, but governments don’t explicitly go in.
* Eble challenged. Will a corporation want to go into a place with unrest? Challenged, gave the example of Venezuela.
* Zane Cooper: Coups… Boxer Rebellion…
* Eble: Other examples?
* Sam W: Bin Laden funded by CIA.
* Gruber: USA helped the mujahedeen coming into a place.
* Eble: Iraq / Iran, Guatemala… coming into a setting in the helm of civilization.
* Gruber: Americans try to do everything. Americans support the Shah… Shah hates us…
* Wermes: Colonials in *Heart of Darkness* hide behind civilization; Americans hide behind freedom.
* Smith: Huh?
* Wermes: King Leopold, setting up civilization. America goes to Iraq,
* Shagena: Hawaii… coffee, sugar, pineapples…
* Eble: Title of film—*King Leopold’s Ghost*. Shockwaves of his actions…
* Zane: Ghost still lives…
* Eble connected to immigration…
* Gruber: So… immigration… parents / kids… **Not convinced** that the U.S. goes in with bad intentions. We don’t put on that “philanthropic pretense” of oil.
* Smith: We’re only going to get your oil…
* Eble: Trapp / OTR… Snarky connection
* Zane: Hard to think about… *are* we going over there with good intentions?
* Jake Wermes: Supreme Court ruled that corporations are people; this translates into big business, who funds political people with agendas are those with the most influence. Follow the money.

Eble talked… connected to *Heart of Darkness*… King Leopold could paint Africans as

* Zane
* Shagena: Threw the dead helmsman overboard so they wouldn’t eat them…
* Eble: Page 112 read from it. How does he pay the savages respect?
* Zane / Sam: He recognizes their restraint.
* Gruber: Numbers… they could still eat us. They choose not to.
* Smith: Shows respect they have for superior. Question—when we were reading about the cannibals, I thought it weird. Why cannibals? Why would Conrad choose to write about cannibals?
* Harrison: Further strengthen this idea that all cannibals are natives.
* Jake Wermes: Playing on the fact that people immediately think “savage” when you discuss cannibals. Acknowledges the same needs. Draws a contrast.
* Eble: So how does this contrast with his depiction of the Europeans?
* Sam W: They wouldn’t have restraint.
* Wermes: He uses that a microcosm for the Congo—the Europeans showed no restraint, couldn’t resist being gluttons.
* Eble summarized.
* Wermes: *Heart of Darkness* = racist towards Europeans. Points out problems of one side. Europeans are bad, do bad actions.
* Smith: Like saying that white people in time of slavery are racist?
* Wermes: Anti-white colonial… also, Marlow goes with preconceived notions. His ideas about Kurtz change. He changes… we also experience this idea in the book.
* Eble: The single story of Africa…
* Andrew Smith: U4U people who are very “into it…” and cry about the cause; then, though, there are people who are more businesslike. Connie gets mad about people who say “How is Africa?” People think of Africa as safaris, starving children, or even South Africa. Large majorities of people think this about Africa.
* Eble: So what pictures do we get of Africa?
* Gruber: Maybe he’s trying to build up for a change in the third part.
* Eble: Is that racism, or is that reality?
* Wermes: To be honest, he’s as non-racist as a white person writing about 1910 Africa can be. Conrad had been through this. Conrad had the ethos; he was not just in Europe writing this. Gives him a sense of ethos. I can let go a bit more.

Eble: What’s going on with Kurtz?

* Collins: Marlow respects him, but I’m thinking that he’ll see some difference
* Smith: Painted…Marlow is so interested in him. Considers him to be like a legend. Spoke about building expectations.
* Wermes: Attitude towards Kurtz = attitude of Wes Mantooth towards Ron Burgundy.
* Zane: I agree with Smith. Marlow will be disappointed. Why is he so into Kurtz? Not hearing voice…
* Eble: Consider the frame…
* Zane: The movie with hype… but then you see it, and it’s not…
* Eble: Marlow is already infatuated…
* Smith: Marlow is a great storyteller. Kurtz is seen as a mythical god to Marlow.
* Eble: Everything we know about him is via rumor.
* Smith:
* Eble: Read from 122-123…what picture of early Kurtz do we get?
* Zane: Important in government…
* Wermes: Suppression of Savage Customs…
* Eble: How does the transformation occur in Kurtz?
* Gruber: Filled with anger…
* Smith: The heart of darkness changed him. Manager / Uncle talking about the jungle changing people. The Harlequin says that he’s been there for years…
* Eble: Is the depiction of the setting
* Gruber: We’re gathering that from what he says…
* Zane: That has happened to Marlow… that’s the start…
* Eble: Challenged Gruber, affirmed Zane.
* Smith: Darkness changes people… it’s a brutal place.
* Wermes: You can separate Africa from the race of the people.
* Eble: Is Africa more than that?
* Gruber: We’re getting one person’s picture of Africa…
* Wermes: Specific place…
* Smith: Different accounts…
* Eble: But it’s a widely-propagated novel…
* Zane: Look at the time period…
* Wermes: Could still make the argument. We shouldn’t celebrate it now.
* Gruber: If we read with intentionality about understanding the past …