B2 Heart of Darkness / Achebe seminar

Fendinger: This is an arch-racist book

Menke:

Callahan: He even compliments the book, despite its racism…

* JJ: Can we then celebrate these book? Where there authors who could be considered great?
* John Geyer: Challenged JJ
* Noah: Challenged…
* JJ: so being honest disqualifies them?
* Geyer: Challenged…
* JJ: Mein Kampf / Feminist Mystique = bad then?
* Spuzzillo: Feminism = racism
* Eippert: Achebe says this book is “permanent literature.”
* Eble: Emphasized Marshall’s point.

JJ: Attack of book? Or attack of Western culture? Begins with an anecdote of attack…

* Liam: He’s using the book to show racism that many Westerners share. Western culture = ignorant about Africa.
* Callahan: Extreme example of the viewpoint of Africa. Read from the text; Conrad is extremely racist towards Africa.
* Mitch: Was Conrad’s view so different?
* Menke: Does that make it not racist?
* Mitch: Our view of Africa is different from his…
* Geyer: Achebe said that Conrad was a part of his time… his use of the n-word, focus on the color black make him more racist than the average Joe. I don’t know if I totally agree. Conrad focused on every word… black may have been more symbolic. N-word had different connotations…
* Liam: Not so much a focus on the word black, but on how often he used it.
* Fendinger: Drawing attention to it by repeating the word.
* Liam: Shared the text…
* Nick Wright: Everyone there being black is a foreign concept. He viewed them as animals in a zoo.
* Noah: Contrast to light… whites are equally as disruptive, morally problematic in a different way.
* JJ: Achebe missed his tone…
* Menke: He has a biased point of view. If we read writing inherently looking for racism, you’ll find it.
* Weber: Professor anecdote… he didn’t mean it intentionally.
* Eble: But can you unintentionally be a racist?
* Olinger: You can say something, not think about it as racist.
* Liam: My personal essay was about that. Doesn’t have to do with a dislike of people… they just don’t know any better.
* JJ: Tornado going through Harlem…
* CLAMOR
* Nick Wright: A racist sentence without intention.
* Geyer: Achebe says this is less calculated malice than reflex.
* Eble: Challenge—reflex versus choice?
* Marshall: Conrad overemphasized stuff. Things won’t fall to the wayside.
* Geyer: Referenced Nick’s comment. He’ll describe them as well as he can… he’s in a zoo.
* Wright: Marlow versus Conrad.
* Menke: Marlow isn’t shown to be bad at all… he’s shown in a good light.
* Wright: Things being described…
* Eble: Read from page five: “It might be contended…”
* Fendinger: He uses the frame narrative as “inception.” I have a trouble with this; inspiration and argument aren’t the same idea. Used the Orwell exemplification…
* Menke: Conrad clearly doesn’t show how Marlow is bad.
* JJ: Fallacy when you attack someone for not having something…? Attacking that he doesn’t have an alternate argument… seems like he’s faulting Conrad
* Eble: What is Achebe’s point in doing this? (tried to clarify JJ’s point)
* Spuzzillo: Answered—he’s challenging what he didn’t do…
* JJ: One-narrator book…so…
* Fendinger: He’s trying to show the inherent ugliness of the thought of their humanity being like theirs. To dialects: These people are clearly well behind the evolutionary cycle.
* Noah: One important idea: He compares African humans to ourselves. He points out that we’re both humans…
* Eble: Are the Africans in this book human?
* Noah: They share a common humanity…
* JJ: Marlow hates every other white man in the book
* Eble: Challenge about Schweitzer
* Schutter: Schweitzer—my junior brother…
* Menke: Went to quote from other student.
* Noah: doesn’t this show they are equal?
* Menke: Normal Europeans…
* Wright: Europeans go back to Africa, lose their civility…
* Spuzzillo: Civilization is a thin veneer.
* JJ: Isn’t this a point…
* Geyer: Not a happy ending in this text. All went poorly… since it ended poorly for all, how can you claim that this involves holding up racism?
* Olinger: Up front, he seems to sympathize with the Africans. I would agree with the claim that he could be a racist; he never looks beyond what Africans can be beyond animals, sufferers…
* Liam agreed.
* Geyer: Wouldn’t that support the idea that colonialism is bad?
* Liam talked.
* JJ: Conrad’s experience…
* Eble: Read from six, 9 about Marco Polo. Eble anecdote—India.
* JJ: Product of his time?
* Eble: Attack just on Conrad, or something else?
* JJ
* Callahan: Look at the ethos of Achebe. He’s a Nigerian writer. The book is about his homeland. We’re getting a biased viewpoint.
* Eble challenge.
* JJ: Conrad is talking about an Africa that wasn’t his.
* Eble challenge: It was! *King Leopold’s Ghost*
* Marshall: One aspect told by a “native” from Nigeria. But we have to take into account
* Eble: Bias exists…
* Marshall: I don’t have knowledge about the daily experience of a Nigerian.
* Liam: We’re biased…
* Spuzzillo: Background helpful or hindering his argument isn’t important?
* Fendinger: What if Achebe was white with a name like Liam Taylor?
* Spuzzillo: Can’t we separate his ethos from his argument?
* Callahan: He looks at Conrad’s background.
* Eble: So, was that claim tenuous?
* Liam: Africa = setting to show Western culture as racist.
* Wright: Africa = a void.
* Menke: Making the setting a metaphysical battlefield doesn’t deprive that of anything.
* Eble: Are they anything else?
* Geyer: Description of rowboat… leans towards the other side: Europeans bringing down the Africans.
* JJ: Achebe’s ethos… brought up out of context?
* Wright: Just because people are educated in school
* JJ: Dehumanizing, taking away education…
* Eble: Brought this back to Geyer’s argument.
* Geyer: Scene in rowboat…shows potential. Scene with woman dressed in ivory.
* Eble: Contrast between Intended / African woman.
* Geyer challenged; “like a million bucks”
* Olinger: Judging a person’s worth on intelligence.
* Menke: Ivory = bad throughout the entire book. She’s covered, worth something not good.
* Mitch: Ivory not bad; exploitation is.
* Geyer challenged.
* Eble challenged him
* Geyer: Back to the men on the rowboat.
* Marshall: Men described as animals…
* Alex Johnson: He admires them.
* Nick Wright: Viewing people as in a zoo = not necessarily bad.
* Eble talked…
* Nick Wright: Woman didn’t run away… contrast with the Intended. He talks to the Intended.
* Eble challenged.
* Wright: To her, the Europeans are to what she is to the Europeans.
* Eble: But do we see her thinking anything?
* Fendinger: Her standing up to a whistle…she’s getting some common sense…
* JJ: Passage about the rowing… made me think that Conrad was a romanticist… only when Marlow is surrounded by other Europeans, servile Africans that he questions the nature of things…
* Eble retort.

Eble: other Africans?

* Mitch: Marlow forms a bond… a distant bond. He looks down at him when he dies…
* Menke questioned…
* Mitch talked…
* Noah: Sent him overboard… being a human = caring for people.
* Fendinger: I agree with Mitch. Helmsman dressed up… he resorts to his barbarity when the arrows fly.
* Menke: A true African?
* Noah: African or European?
* Eble challenged Spuzzillo.
* Austin Sanders: Africans, Europeans are different. Not saying that one is better than the other. He paints them both in one-dimension…and in a negative light. He won’t have a conversation with an African… not possible. More of a trash on human nature…
* Spuzzillo: Only difference = sophistication of cruelty. Humanity = barbaric, self-interested.
* Alex: Difference in Europeans—the same for all of us. The core of his claim is the same.
* JJ: As far as the two lines he gives the Africans. It’s only slander if it isn’t true.
* Eble challenged, went to Spuzz.
* Spuzz versus JJ.
* Diesslin: Shared a quote from part I.
* JJ: How much of a role did the natives have in creating this situation?