October 31, 2014

Fendinger: Are the people of the Congo savage or are they made savage?

* Schutter: Subjective… made that way? Or perceived that way?
* Fendinger: Could the Europeans made savage?
* Liam Taylor: Colonization of the Native Americans… Europeans are more savage.
* Spuzzillo: “This too was a place of darkness”
* Mitch Poch: Amy Tan’s mother… seemed incompetent. So, to the Europeans who don’t understand their culture, the Africans seem savage.
* Eble: Where have we seen them?
* Wright: Dying…
* Liam: Chained together, treated like animals.
* Marshall: Marlow says that they’re beautiful to be looked at.
* Eble read from the text.
* Marshall: Sees them from a human-to-human person.
* Mr. Rose: Diction—is there a kind of arrogance? Sounds ambiguous…
* Austin: Going off what Mr. Rose said… sounds like he’s describing an animal at the zoo. He represents the same
* Eble anecdote about “stable of black running backs” at LSU
* Liam: Shared an anecdote about Indians, Mexicans…
* Marshall: It’s also a bit more of Marlow marveling
* Fendinger: You can marvel at a lion in a cage, but that doesn’t make them free.
* Spuzzillo: Read from the text; in his civilization, people lose some of that vital energy.
* Geyer: Everything white in the book is bad, out of place. Connected with other parts of the text.
* Wright: Accountant = doesn’t belong, but doesn’t make it seem negative.
* Menke: He does this with the brickmaker, too. He describes the brickmaker as a young gentleman… he has a hooked nose, a forked beard. He almost looks like him.
* Alex Johnson: “Hairdresser’s dummy” “That’s backbone.” He calls the natives shapes, creatures, shadows, bundles of acute angles. Then describes the grandiose description of the accountant.
* Geyer: Page 80… everything was black. He introduces the white man, too….
* Eble: Attitude towards Europeans?
* Poch: Contrasts Europeans with situation of Africans. Sarcastic recognition of the Europeans; emphasizes injustice.
* Wright: Europeans never do any actual work. No bricks, no rivets. Impossible for the Belgians…they choose not to do work.
* Fendinger: He also talks about how he goes to the Central Station with a big, fat European. He skins his “poor nose.”
* Menke: Speaking about the brickmaker… “ this papier-mache Mephistopheles,”
* Eble: Other examples? What else is being done there?
* Geyer: They were bombing the coastline… made it seem like they were doing it regardless of a reason.
* Wright: The chief stabs the guy… the Belgians aren’t aware of the whole thing.
* Johnson: Leopold never set foot in the Congo. The Europeans in this book create their own mini-Europe, right next to the Native Africans.
* Olinger: Connected back with Chomsky. Minorities, immigrants coming to U.S.
* Eble made a connection with Myth #14, Americans doing the same thing.
* Fendinger: Marlow’s aunt personifies that idea very well. Read a quote from the text. Shows how the Europeans do the same thing in the Congo.
* Geyer: You see that again on page 74—Marlow is about to go to the doctor’s office. The two women…expectation that they’re not coming back.
* Fendinger: Fates in Greek mythology
* Eble: “We who are about to die salute you!” So…the doctor…what does he focus on?
* Geyer / Fendinger answered…
* Ethan Callahan: Seems like he’s trying to conduct an experiment.
* Liam
* Austin: Europeans being savage… remembered a quote of Marlow being self-aware of the effects.
* Fendinger: Fat guy fell out of the hammock… Marlow could feel himself…
* Mitch: Interesting for the doctor… read from the text
* Callahan: Europeans being civilized considered evil / darkness a disease?
* Eippert: Fresleven = a guy died, people couldn’t find a replacement.
* Geyer:
* Olinger: You could “get savage,” would that mean that other Europeans think that those who have been exposed would be susceptible, beaten, given the same misery as the native Africans? Even if they were savage, they were white-skinned.
* Liam: That’s true to an extent…
* Olinger: Self-declared “being savage?”
* Menke: Where are you going with this?
* Eble talked.
* Olinger: Psychology—Mr. Schaffer said that everyone would be invisible…what would you do?
* Eippert: Psychology—Stanford Prison Experiment… 12 guards, 12 people as subjects. Conrad’s point: We’re all evil.
* Diesslin: Page 83… first meets the chief accountant. Read from the text…
* Fendinger read an awesome quote: Related to Trapp

They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind -- as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea -- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . ."

* Eble talked. Warned about part II.

Olinger: Was the U.S. helping bad things in the Congo? Or unknowingly doing / supporting bad things?

* Menke: Keep communism out of the Congo… unintended consequences.
* Marshall: Publicly-stated goals… resources in the Congo.
* Olinger: Tone of the film—President Bush was standing next to the man who was standing next to him… ANGER TOWARDS THE U.S.
* Eble: Upset?
* Olinger: U.S. being secretive about things?
* Herriott: Underlying goal of resource exploitation. Coltan: 73% of resources there. Essential for national defense. Global communications. I can see why they wouldn’t …
* Eble: Upset by this?
* Olinger: People want to see the U.S. go down.
* Fendinger: *Heart of Darkness* kind of thing… plenty of darkness.
* Geyer: Not really surprised… U.S. has always been involved with misguided attempts at getting rid of Communism.
* Marshall: King Leopold versus U.S. pretense.

Continuation: November 5th, 2014

Absent: Kairos guys—Luke Weber, Alex Johnson, Connor Peed, Hank Woodard, Marshall Eippert, Griffin Mulvaney, Mitch Poch

John Geyer: Cited the quote “the earth seemed unearthly” (**paradox)**

* Spuzz: Ominous feeling of pervasive, all around him… a tiny shell of civilization. A larger meaning is all around him.
* Fendinger: Like when Marlow lights up a match… darkness is all around him.
* Eble: Related to the quiz question.
* Worobetz: Darkness, races… ominous view of people on the river bank. Europeans make themselves higher.
* Spuzz: He seems disgusted by the Europeans.
* Olinger: Who were the cannibals? Africans or Europeans? Spoke about the helmsman, not wanting the cannibals to eat him. Does he sympathize with them? Or look at them with disgust?
* Liam: Spoke well about the cannibals… speaking only about one guy. Helmsman = asshole?
* Fowler: Formed a bond…
* Olinger: Doing him a favor…
* Fowler: He thought back… we could have fed him to cannibals.
* Menke: Felt like it would be better to feed it to them… pilgrims showed no respect.
* Worobetz: Shows holiness of nature?
* Fendinger: Shows a primal state…
* Geyer: Not holy… one more body lost in the wilderness. Not as holy as it is dark, mysterious, big.
* JJ Harper: Seems like final respects. He has to get rid of it somehow.
* Olinger read from the text. The wilderness took back what it originally owned…
* Fendinger: When they’re under attack—the natives make the forest move. They’re the ones throwing the sticks.
* Worobetz: Power of environment over us? (**great questions)**
* Fendinger: I would say so…
* Menke: The steamboat… all he has to do is blare the horn.
* Fendinger: Kurtz claims that all is his, but the forest would just laugh, shake the stars…
* Geyer: Point of book—men created civilization, but once they go to Africa, they lose control and get the chair knocked out from under them.
* JJ: How they choose to rebuild, to shape the environment. Kurtz’s letter. “Exterminate all the brutes.” He finds power there. Becomes a tyrant, a voice. (**great comment)**
* Sanders: Discomfort on Marlow’s part at the connection between the natives, the Europeans. Read from the text.
* Eble read more from the quote… Nietzsche…Eble talked a ton
* Fendinger read from the text… went back to part I. “Everywhere was darkness…” Original sin cannot be replaced.

JJ: This reading reminded me of King Leopold—would KL have stayed in the Congo?

* Fendinger: Kurtz = embodiment of false goals of England.
* Worobetz: That sounds a lot like the coast… enigma…comparing the humanity?
* Eble asked for clarity…
* Spuzz: Spoke about the manifesto about helping the natives… then writing “Exterminate all the brutes.”
* Eble talked…
* Geyer: Maybe that was just the mask that they wore… then their brutality comes out.

Fendinger: Talks about the boat, his trip moving into the more primal elements (Austin let JJ talk)

* JJ: People abusing the Congo, Kurtz… they might also be doing it out of spite.
* Eble: Evidence?
* JJ: Eldorado expedition… Marlow says they’re dirty, but Marlow also feels bad for them. Not any need to push him; they weren’t conserving their troops. There’s some reason why they want people to die for them.
* Geyer: Not spite—perhaps fear? Take away the benefits—without the horn, the Winchesters squirting lead…they would be the weak ones.
* JJ: Most would be at the hands of the natives. Reminds me of the Native American stories… people cast native Americans as evil savages attacking white homesteaders.
* Menke: Contrasts pilgrims with cannibals….
* JJ: I was impressed by how Conrad portrayed that scene. Through Marlow, he was able to present them as lacking sympathy… pink pyjamas…
* Geyer: Emphasizing cannibals’ restraint—the Europeans had none… they wouldn’t survive.
* Spuzzillo: Civilization makes them soft…
* Eble read from the text: "Absurd!" he cried. "This is the worst of trying to tell. . . . Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal -- you hear -- normal from year's end to year's end. And you say, Absurd! Absurd be -- exploded! Absurd! My dear boys, what can you expect from a man who out of sheer nervousness had just flung overboard a pair of new shoes! Now I think of it, it is amazing I did not shed tears. I am, upon the whole, proud of my fortitude. I was cut to the quick at the idea of having lost the inestimable privilege of listening to the gifted Kurtz. Of course I was wrong. The privilege was waiting for me. Oh, yes, I heard more than enough. And I was right, too. A voice. He was very little more than a voice. And I heard -- him -- it -- this voice -- other voices -- all of them were so little more than voices -- and the memory of that time itself lingers around me, impalpable, like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean,
* Schutter: I would agree… being unfamiliar, struggling, having guy dies at his feet… that has to be traumatic. Not a European experience—they have no right to think it’s normal. He’ll never forget.
* Liam: Perhaps why he threw the body into the river. Cannibals / food…
* Geyer: This goes back to what Spuzz said—“soft” Europeans. Cannibals were stoic.
* Fendinger: Cannibals think when they hear the shriek “Let’s go eat ‘im!”
* Schutter: They’re used to people dying. Europeans aren’t used to this.
* JJ: Do we know of the savages’ religious beliefs?
* Eble responded—do the Africans receive any voice? Do we know this?
* Geyer: Europeans go to the primal view… they converge to that one type of degraded person, but the Africans keep their identity… except for the helmsman, who, to Marlow, looked like a dog in breeches.
* Callahan: Insanity—with Kurtz… “And the lofty frontal bone of Mr. Kurtz! They say the hair goes on growing sometimes, but this -- ah -- specimen, was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball -- an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and -- lo! -- he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation.”
* JJ: This racism… a defense mechanism?
* Liam: They put the black people below them.
* JJ: We can quickly devolve…people can’t be human…
* Geyer: Racism is a justification for modernization… they’re not peole…
* JJ: Insanity…
* Eble talked… natural law… spoke about seeing people as human / nonhumans.
* Liam: Spoke about interracial marriage, interracial background / ancestry. Spoke about Malcolm X.
* Eble talked about slave narratives.
* Liam: Connected it to *Django Unchained*
* Olinger: Seeing people as objects.

Eble: So does this book deprecate the Europeans, humanize the Africans, or both?

* Geyer: Leaning more towards “It’s our fault.”
* Spuzz: Racism in the book = incidental to the story. We all have the lizard brain.
* Austin: Main argument—calling humanity evil. Two equally as dark descriptions. Describes the natives as an enigma. Also criticizing the Europeans, but shows the Africans as dark. What’s his argument for humanity as good?

Eble: So—can we distinguish between Kurtz and the other Europeans?

* Kurtz chooses to go into the darkness; the others are still clinging to civilization. Referred to the painting.
* Fendinger: Is Kurtz, then, the blindfolded woman?
* JJ: Putting the blindfold on the woman?
* Fendinger: Isn’t Kurtz alienating himself from the light of civilization, but also engulfing himself in the darkness?
* JJ: Acting for the light, but keeping the light out… trying to increase his standing...wants to improve his standing.
* Fendinger: He’s not working to get promotions… why raise his status with whites?
* JJ: Why would he send ivory back? He’s still writing reports… still sending things in, still in contact with the outer station.
* Fendinger: Isn’t his business a façade? He’s the god…
* Schutter: Personal gain… he’s a god among them. Playing both sides? Doing it both ways…
* Fowler: On the steamboat to deliver ivory, but goes on the rowboat to stay with the natives.
* Spuzz: Prophet, voice of the darkness… Marlow wants to have someone put into words the chaos of the darkness.
* JJ: Voice personifying what he’s looking for?
* Eble: Trying to make sense of the darkness… we know nothing about Kurtz yet… haven’t met him… the transition is key.
* Olinger: Wouldn’t Kurtz be committing the same atrocity as the other Europeans, the natives? When given the opportunity to turn back to a primal state, humans will return to a cannibalistic state… seeing other humans as objects… if presented with the opportunity, won’t people turn back to their original state?

JJ: Therefore, with the massive amount of our current society…we have people everywhere, we know everything… is that  *bad*? Do we need darkness? Referenced a picture of soldiers during WWII flipping the bird to others…

* Olinger: Discussed a quote from *I Am Legend*: “Light up the darkness”
* Geyer: Cited Emerson… (from Minnick’s class). If you take away civilization, we become dependent upon an artificial world that when our primal instincts come out, it implodes.
* Menke: AP Environmental science—civilizing people in uncivilized places. Learning about medicinal properties.
* JJ: Connected with Aristotle / Plato. In a proper society, people need to get out their darkness. People “went loose” in Africa. Connected to repression of ID… Violent video games = an outlet.
* Olinger, Liam challenged.
* Eble talked.
* JJ: What’s with football, coliseums…
* Olinger: Such small exercises won’t be enough…
* JJ: Not doing it for pleasure…for relief…
* Liam: Spoke about alcoholics…
* Menke: I don’t think people play video games as an outlet…
* Fowler: Working out, being good at football…we like to hit people hard…
* Austin: Any passion / fantasy / extracurricular activity = desire to see yourself in some other life. Escapism?
* Geyer: Conrad is getting at the idea that if you need an outlet, there’s a problem with the arbitrary guidelines of society.
* Sanders: *Scarlet Letter*—is society a good, necessary evil?
* Eble: Connected to Spuzz’s early comment.
* JJ: Economics …
* Menke: Attack on the predominant economic way…
* JJ: Without capitalism, would that have happened?
* Geyer: Communist nation doing the same thing…
* Eble: Does one economic system allow darkness to flourish more?
* Fendinger: Back to quote on 77… quote from day one…
* JJ: Not many Muslim scientists..
* Eble talked…
* JJ: “Great African cake”
* Eble talked about Chomsky…
* Geyer: Not saying that capitalism is the problem.
* Sanders: Colonial thinking influences?
* Eble: So… does that still exist today?
* Sanders:
* JJ: Kony versus Iraq / Afghanistan?
* Geyer: Aborigines in Africa…we haven’t tried to exploit people…
* Eble talked.
* Liam: Government connection… Native Americans having little say in America…

Light versus darkness?

Why racism?

Kurtz…