Created by Nancy Babienko

Exercise A – Do this with a classmate’s paper.

PART A: Highlight ALL of the **first three paragraphs** of the paper as follows:  
1) In one color, highlight sentences where, either implicitly or explicitly, both *Heart of Darkness*/imperialism/colonialism AND the Critical Theory are mentioned.

2) In another color, highlight the sentences that address *Heart of Darkness*/imperialism/colonialism exclusively.

3) In a third color, highlight the sentences that address the Critical Theory exclusively.

PART B: Highlight ONLY to opening (t.s.) and closing sentences of each subsequent paragraph for the rest of the paper.   
  
PART C: Finally, circle any sentences that say things like, “Through the lens of [whatever theory]…” or something similarly awkward in an attempt to apply theory to novella.

PART D: Show your results to your classmate and share what you noticed.



Exercise B

Look at the structure of the opening paragraph(s) of your classmate’s paper:

Rhetorically speaking, what strategy does this writer use to begin the paper? (NO, I do NOT mean the rhetorical triangle!)

* Is the writer presenting an idea in order to “push against” it, in order to explain what idea, belief or practice the theory and/or the novella challenges?
* Is the writer presenting an idea in order to build upon it?
* Is the writer using a representative example from either the novella or the theory in order to lead into a larger claim about what is at stake in the novella, theory and/or this paper itself?
* Something else?

In other words, analyze the opening strategies of the paper in terms of INTENTIONALITY.

* A paper’s structure, as well as its content, should be INTENTIONAL, not random or the result of past habits or lack of planning.

What do you notice? Share your findings and suggestions with your classmate.



Exercise C

Trace your classmate’s paper’s thesis; where does it first appear in paper, where does it appear next, and after that? Highlight each instance that the thesis appears.

* Remember, a thesis is arguable, it has stakes (so what/why it matters), and, in the case of *Heart of Darkness,* would have some connection to European colonialism/European imperialism and how the Critical Theory in question applies to that issue.

What do you notice? Does the thesis evolve? Does it repeat itself verbatim over and over? Does it lose focus or get “abandoned” as the paper progresses? Share your findings with your classmate.

Deconstruction

The Greek philosopher Plato once said, “When the mind's eye rests on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and comprehends them, and functions intelligently” (Plato). Unfortunately for the reader of Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*, the mind’s eye is rarely illuminated by truth and reality, instead, the narrative of Charlie Marlow’s journey up the Congo River is riddled with contradicting binary oppositions and confusion. However, Conrad does not mourn the loss of a clear and apparent truth in *Heart of Darkness.* On the contrary, Conrad depicts that it is European society’s false perception that stable truths exist that enables the horrors of European imperialism in the Congo. Paralleling Jacques Derrida’s Deconstructionist critique of Western thinking, Conrad displays that the new gang of virtue’s main message, that colonialism justifies European involvement in Africa, is based off of a false distinction between “civilized” Europeans and “savage” Africans, and is therefore false.

In his Deconstructionist critical theory, philosopher Jacques Derrida challenges western philosophy based on discerning an unchanging and defined truth, a philosophy which Derrida refers to as *logocentric*. Thus, he critiques the supposedly stable truth, that the good of colonialism justifies European involvement in Africa, put forth by European society in *Heart of Darkness*. Central to Deconstructionism is the idea that “language refers neither to things in the world nor to our concepts of things but only to the play of signifiers of which language itself consists” (Tyson 245). That is to say, the signifier, a word, only refers to other signifiers, other words. Derrida demonstrates that “there are no self-identical terms in language that stand on their own; language consists of differences, not identities” (Rivkin and Ryan 339). Derrida coins the word *différance* to name this idea that the identity or meaning can only be found in language by looking at the differences between words. However, Derrida’s argument is in direct contrast with western logocentric philosophy which “places at the center (*centric*) of its understanding of the world a concept (*logos*) that organizes and explains the world for us while remaining outside of the world it organizes and explains” (Tyson 249). In order to explain the world, logocentric philosophy puts forth a series of “truths”. However, as Derrida contends these “truths” are based upon the distinction between truth and untruth. And as these two terms derive their meaning from each other, this distinction, upon which logocentric philosophy is based, is false. Through this same reasoning, it can be shown that in *Heart of Darkness*, the logocentric ideal that colonialism justifies European involvement in Africa is ultimately false due to its basis on a false hierarchy between the “civilized” Europeans and the “savage” Africans. In this depiction of the falsity of the “truth” behind colonialism, Conrad displays that colonialism is little more than a cover up and enabler for imperialism, thereby suggesting that the false truths of all logocentric thought cover up and enable the horrors of the human condition.

In his novella *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad provides many binaries within the society of Western Europeans, such as differences between men and women, truth and lies, and civilized and savage. Relating to the work of Jacques Derrida, these binaries create mini-hierarchies based off of the societal ideologies of the Europeans. Through contradictions to these binaries, Conrad reveals how human ideologies are actually ambiguous and criticizes Western culture for using these ideologies as a justification for imperialism. He therefore suggests society should not be based around subjective ideals because the falsity of their very nature cannot support the necessary justification to create a truly civilized society.

By illustrating the falsity of establishing concrete binaries in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad reveals the injustice of imperialism because the ideals that are being imposed are actually a product of Western culture itself, and therefore cannot be a universal basis with which one can judge others. Jacques Derrida argues that people always “express [their] views in terms of opposites” and that these opposites inevitably also form “little hierarchies” (Murfin 200). By viewing experiences in this way, humans create their own ideologies from the hierarchies between each of the binary opposites. This is shown in *Heart of Darkness* when Marlow talks about a native on his boat: “And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman…He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs” (Conrad 109). The metaphor comparing the native to a “dog”, as well as calling him a “savage” degrades the native by suggesting he is less human than Marlow and therefore inferior. This separation between the “civilized” Europeans, represented by Marlow, and the “savage” natives, is an example of a binary created by social ideologies that also helps establish hierarchies. Although these ideologies may differ from person to person and culture to culture, Derrida has noted that most western cultures have a similar style of ideology of what he calls “logocentrism.” Lois Tyson helps define this term in his essay Critical Theory Today, saying philosophies of this style “place at its center a concept that organizes and explains the world for us while remaining outside of the world it explains” (Tyson 249). Derrida criticizes logocentric values because their foundation is made up of ideological assumptions, which in turn come from subjective views of personal experience and binary oppositions. Ideologies are therefore too fluid and ambiguous to be the basis for oppressive courses of action such as imperialism. Joseph Conrad presents many western binaries in *Heart of Darkness* that are used as justification to practice imperialism, and then proceeds to contradict these binaries in order to illustrate the falsity of their beliefs and to criticize Europeans for their attempts to base a supposedly “civilized” society off of these human ideals.

Carola Kaplan, in her article "Colonizers, Cannibals, and the Horror of Good Intentions in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", states, "Throughout the text [of *Heart of Darkness*], Marlow insists upon the distinction between... civilization and savagery; and, most of all, between Self and Other" (1). This is definitely the case; the European imperialists' need to separate and classify perceived binary opposites is clearly illustrated in *Heart of Darkness*. Even before traveling into Africa, the imperialists, including protagonist and narrator Marlow, have established hierarchies that render the European form of civilization superior to African "savagery". In order to maintain these preestablished hierarchies, throughout the novel the Europeans constantly attempt to distinguish, as Kaplan states, between civilized and savage; between moral and immoral; and between Self and Other, which can be seen as the known and the unknown. In doing this, the Europeans are then able to justify their designation of one as superior and the other inferior, which in turn enables them to justify their imperialistic acts in Africa. However, in the course of the story the opposites that the Europeans are trying to distinguish and separate inevitably meld together. The “civilized” Europeans commit acts that reveal their savagery, the “morality” of their mission in Africa is proven to be motivated only by greed and violence, and the unknown blends with the known until the two are almost indistinguishable. Yet Marlow and the other Europeans refuse to recognize this, and continue to define, separate, and distinguish.

The Europeans’ desire to separate and define is in direct opposition to philosopher Derrida’s theories, expressed in the essay “Deconstruction and *Heart of Darkness*.” The essay says that according to Derrida, “We tend to think and express our thoughts in terms of opposites [….] mutually exclusive pairs or dichotomies [that] are too numerous to list.” These dichotomies “are not simply oppositions; they are also little hierarchies. In other words, they contain one term that our culture views as being superior and one term viewed as negative or inferior… But always the hierarchy exists” (Murfin 200). However, according to Derrida’s theory of *différence*, the European imperialism that is based on separation of binary opposites can be seen as false. The essay states, “all language is constituted by *différence*” (201). It then goes on to give the definition of *différence*,which is that “meanings of words lie in the differences between them and the things they name” (201). In other words, one cannot define a word without depending on the difference of another. This serves to bring two opposite words closer together, because they are more connected than separate. The idea of a hierarchy based on the distinction between binary opposites is thus undermined, and the European justification of imperialism based on perceived differences between inferior and superior is shown to be false. The hierarchy does exist in a very real sense: the natives are being objectified, exploited, and enslaved based on the imperialism that is justified by this presumed pecking order. But underneath it all, there is no true basis for the Europeans' arbitrary designation of inferior v. superior. Thus, by merging the binary opposites that Marlow and the other Europeans are trying to separate, Conrad suggests that imperialism is unjustified, as it is based upon a lie.

Lacanian Psychoanalysis

When describing Jacques Lacan, English professor Dino Fellgua states that "Lacan is properly post-structuralist, which is to say that Lacan questions any simple notion of either "self" or "truth," exploring instead how knowledge is constructed by way of linguistic and ideological structures that organize not only our conscious but also our unconscious lives." (Felluga). Lacan's exploration of how linguistic structures signify placement and meaning in a social hierarchy is clearly seen in Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*. Throughout the text, protagonist Charlie Marlow expresses his anxiety at the conflict between the European need to differentiate and the African wilderness that merges outwardly opposing features together. From these confrontations, Marlow discovers the inconsistencies between the European presumptions of Africa and the actual conduct of these "savages", contributing to Marlow's growing discomfort at the notion that European knowledge does not always signify truth. Jacques Lacan argues that the European desire to distinguish represents the upholding of what Lacan calls the "Symbolic Order or the big Other", the social structure that bestows concrete meaning and identity to objects in a rigidly constructed hierarchy that derives its influence from the rational separation of binary opposites. To the Europeans, the Symbolic Order serves not only as justification for the social order they have constructed, but the Order also represents the unconscious European desire to satisfy the void left by the initial separation from the Real.  
 According to Lacan, the Real is defined as "the state of nature as a time of fullness or completeness that is subsequently lost through the entrance into language." (Felluga). With the introduction into the social structure of language, the realization of this desire is deemed impossible by Lacan. This concept is evident by the originally symbiotic relationship between the child and the mother, which causes the child to develop "a false narcissistic sense of unity." (Rivkin 123). Since there is a sense of unity, the child is able to enjoy the pleasure of living without having to acknowledge boundaries. However, with the gradual acquirement of language, the child becomes aware of the "territorialization" of the body in that he recognizes that there are physical boundaries existing in-between the mother and child. The irretrievable break of the union between the mother and the child represents the first encounter with the Oedipus Complex, which Lacanian theory views as "our way of recognizing the need to obey social strictures and to follow a closed differential system of language in which we understand ‘self’ in relation to ‘others.’” (Felluga). The repression of the Complex and acceptance of the restrictions placed by external forces serves to demonstrate the acceptance of the Symbolic Order, and its ability to control the individual's desire and use of language. Consequently, humans are driven to find substitutes that will conceal the truth that the originally pure existence of the Real is unattainable. The application of the Lacanian emphasis on the Symbolic Order and the inability to experience the Real to Conrad's text reveals the European desire for the Real is manifested and perverted in an unjustifiable endeavor that violently objectifies the African land. The goal of imperialism is to not civilize, but rather sustain the Symbolic Order, where the enforcement of binary oppositions continues the fantasy of European "superiority", thereby superficially fulfilling the narcissistic desire for the Real.

By definition, the imagination has no confines. It does not lend itself well to expression through simple, otherwise meaningless sounds, or through insubstantial black scratches on a sheet of paper. And yet the entirety of Western civilization is based on those insignificant noises and nonsensical scribbles, on the imperfect expression of our subconscious that we call “language.” Charlie Marlow in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* uses this faulty system of expression to relate the story of his journey into the Congo, and consequently struggles to fully impart the implications of his passage. Throughout his narrative, Marlow struggles with his own innate inability to express the imaginary realm of the subconscious with mere words.

French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argues a point that is pronounced in Marlow’s struggle to provide an adept narrative: language, Lacan says, is inherently inadequate as a result of the fluid relationships upon which it is based. This inadequacy begins in an ideology laid out by one of Lacan’s predecessors, Sigmund Freud. According to Freudian psychoanalysis, our tendency as humans is to constantly search for the absolute unification that was experienced in the mother’s womb, a oneness that is destroyed as an infant matures and realizes that self and mother are separate entities. Lacan refers to this pre-language realm of the unconscious as the Imaginary realm, a realm in which (as editors Rivkin and Ryan describe it) “the cut that separates knower from world, word from thing…has not yet occurred” (Rivkin and Ryan 336). In order to express the Imaginary, mankind has devised the Symbolic, a complex series of relationships between signifier (words) and signified (the ideas they express). However, to fully express the Imaginary through the Symbolic (in other words, to achieve the Real) is impossible, because in communicating the Symbolic, man establishes a difference between the signifier – the word or symbol – and what is actually signified. Hence, language is based on an inherent separation and is therefore imperfect, as Rivkin and Ryan explain in their article on Lacanian psychoanalysis: “The arrival of the Symbolic and the shattering of the Imaginary thus consists of the installation of a combined linguistic/psychological separation of the child both from its initial object, the mother, and from the undifferentiated matter of existence” (Rivkin and Ryan 124). The complicated pre-language fluidity of the Imaginary, even after the arrival of language, continues to form the basis of the subconscious. Consequently, editor Ross Murfin writes that Lacan “treats the unconscious as a language, a form of discourse” (Murfin 121).

This connection between the unconscious and language presents an obstacle for Marlow as he struggles to address the subconscious motivations of European imperialism using the language of storytelling; indeed, the ambiguities of an imperfect language pose a constant problem as he attempts to explain his journey through confusing metaphors and enigmatic images. Ultimately, Marlow chooses to lie to Kurtz’s Intended about the true horrors of European imperialism, abandoning the linguistic nuances and complexities he has created throughout his narrative for the cut-and-dried, Western version of the European presence in the Congo. In doing this, Marlow refuses to acknowledge the inherent complexity of language and the society it supports. This denial parallels the larger refusal of Western society to accept the essential, inexpressible fluidity that is the basis of our subconscious and of the system we have devised to express that subconscious – a fluidity that would prove the regimented, systematic European imperialism in the Congo to be based upon falsity.

Feminism

Essentialist feminists argue that women have strong ties to the natural world and are able to preserve them outside of the restrictions of male society. Males, while initially linked to the natural world, must break this linkage in order to enter patriarchal society. Because there exists a natural tie between man and the physical world, breaking this tie to form male civilization is a rejection of something inherent, a denial of a truth. All subsequent domination of the natural, female world is therefore based on the pretense of superiority rather than actual superiority. In Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, European, patriarchal society engages in imperialism within, or domination of, the Congo in Africa, which can be characterized as the feminine entity. Narrator Charlie Marlow ventures up the African Congo, partially conscious of a strange, unexplainable connection he feels to the wilderness but altogether trying to uphold the distinctions between Europe and Africa. By blurring the lines between supposedly clear distinctions, Conrad reveals that the European culture’s supposed superiority to African civilization that justifies imperialism is a false construct of society. Without a true hierarchy dividing the two civilizations, imperialism breaks down into an unjustifiable, aimless action. Furthermore, Conrad portrays Marlow’s lie that upholds the false hierarchy in order to critique patriarchy by criticizing its conscious perpetuation of false superiority.

Essentialist feminists speak of a connection to the natural world that women are able to live with and men are forced to reject to enter patriarchy, explaining the natural links to wilderness that Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness,* must suppress. These natural links are largely based on the ideas of Jacques Lacan, who articulates an initial stage at birth “when you were closest to the pure materiality of existence, or what Lacan terms ‘the Real’ (Felluga). This beginning state, experienced between zero and six months of age, can be seen as the basis of existence. Lacan’s name of “the Real” connotes a truth in this stage, which has yet to be confronted with the constructs of society. Feminist Luce Irigary acknowledges this state that Lacan speaks of, and furthers the implications for male society based on man’s initial connection to materiality (Donovan). Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, in “Feminist Paradigms,” articulate Luce Irigaray’s distinction “between blood and sham,” between the direct link to material nature in women’s bodies and the flight from such contact that is the driving force of male abstraction, its pretense to be above matter and outside of nature, in civilization (Rivkin 529). Irigaray presents the point that men must have some initial contact with this physical world because they flee from “such contact” in order to enter male civilization. Irigaray argues that in male abstraction, there is “pretense to be above matter and outside of nature.” By calling this a pretense, she is implying that men are not truly “above matter and outside of nature,” an idea that comes up in *Heart of Darkness* as the Europeans’ actions are a mere pretense for purpose.

The ties between women and nature are strong, argues feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray. She states that women are inextricably tied to the world around them, by sheer virtue of their “physical differences” from men, and that “women…are innately capable of offering a different ethics from men, one more attuned to preserving the earth from destruction by weapons devised by men” (Rivkin 529). Irigaray focuses Lacan’s theory that men must separate and define themselves from their mothers, while women remain close to their maternal figures as they “acquire a gender identity” (529). Therefore, while women are unhindered by a need to assert themselves as independents, the masculine psyche “adopt[s] a violent and aggressive posture toward the world left behind which is now construed as an ‘object’” (529). This transition from human to object is key because of all that it suggests; the mother (and, as a result, women) becomes a commodity to be traded, possessed and subverted, a simple *thing* to be objectified and thus dominated. Irigaray posits that, “men must separate from the bloody origin in the mother and elevate himself above such matter…man seeks to extract himself from matter and to dominate it” (347). The bloody origin represents man’s very beginnings in his mother’s womb, encapsulated by not only her body but by her protection and her being. The fact that the word “bloody” is used also draws a link to the “violent and aggressive” stance that man takes against his mother; man’s entrance into the world (and his subsequent initial separation from the woman bearing him) is violent, and this violence carries on psychologically. Of course, it is impossible for a man to truly ever separate himself from the mother figure; her existence is a truth which cannot be overcome. Thus, violence and aggression are born out of desperation for domination. It is the attempt to dominate which Irigaray describes that creates the hierarchy of the patriarchy.

Within the world of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* a separation between mother and child is exemplified through the relationship between the imperialist Europeans and the Congo. The child, European civilization, is impudent and arrogant, while the mother, the Congo, is stern and unwavering. Not only that, but the mother is victimized, shown to be strong even in the face of masculine violence and the suggestion of symbolic rape. Theirs is a twisted and dysfunctional relationship, but as the child struggles to assert his dominance over his mother, through the push of imperialism, it becomes clear that they are inescapably intertwined. Charlie Marlow serves as the face of the Europeans. He voyages into the wilderness of the Congo as a member of “civilized society,” a society attempting to separate from its innate nature and “abstract [itself] from the material world” (Rivkin 529). The implication that the Europeans’ imperialism is an exemplar of a desire for domination, rather than a benevolent undertaking, undermines the credibility of the patriarchy’s motives as a whole.

In Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness,* Western culture’s patriarchal society as an institution is questioned when Conrad portrays the female as having more power than the male. Set in the Congo, Conrad places his protagonist Charlie Marlow deep into a feminine-attributed wilderness that dominates and belittles not only Marlow but every man working there. In the male and female binary opposition, the male places himself with more power than the female, but through the feminine nature’s obvious control over the masculine civilization in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad suggests that women have just as much or more power than men. Though there are two main branches of feminist theory - constructivists that believe gender roles are a construct of society and essentialists that believe men and woman are born with essential biological differenes - both critique the patriarchy that has defined the acceptable roles of women and men in society. Through this emergence of the opposition to European society’s recognized roles of the genders and the portrayal of the female having more power than the male, Conrad counters the idea that society’s patriarchy is justified and consequently questions the justification for imperialism in the Congo.

Freudian Psychoanalysis

Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* travels deep into the heart of the Congo and simultaneously the human psyche. While Freud’s work with the unconscious was not well-known when *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1899, Conrad’s Europeans and natives exemplify various aspects of the psyche and serve to question the roles and limitations of civilization. Freud’s theories divide the mind in three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. The ego controls how people act in daily life, making decisions on what is and isn’t morally or socially acceptable according to the superego. The id, or the unconscious, contains repressed desires or emotions, that is, socially or morally forbidden desires which the ego represses. According to Freud, the ego is a necessary part of the conscious that allows civilization to exist, through controlling inappropriate impulses (Rivkin and Ryan 119). Conrad’s Europeans consider themselves superior to the Congolese because they believe that they lack the natives’ animalistic desires; however, characters such as Kurtz demonstrate that the Europeans do possess a primitive id within. The natives, on the other hand, are condemned and dehumanized by the Europeans for their wild emotion, yet the Europeans are befuddled by the cannibals’ seemingly inexplicable restraint. Conrad contrasts the European’s beliefs about their superiority with the reality of the two groups’ similarities to demonstrate that pre-eminence or hierarchy between the two groups exists. Conrad reveals that some Europeans are aware of this fact, such as when Kurtz realizes the horror of his equality with the people he tries to dominate and Marlow perpetuates the lie of European superiority in order to preserve society and imperialism. Despite this awareness, however, the Europeans continue with the false system in order to maintain order and their way of life. Through the revelation that the Europeans possess no inherent superiority and are equal to the natives, Conrad condemns the concept of imperialism while at the same time acknowledging the necessity of the civilization which perpetuates it.

Sigmund Freud theorizes that the foundation for civilization lies in an unseen conflict within the context of the human psyche, one that represses those biological drives it considers less socially-acceptable and honors the side of the brain composing morality. According to Freud, the human psyche contains opposition between a libidinal desire intent on combination with other humans for protection and an aggressive force desiring violence in order to return to a natural state of existence. In application of Freud’s psychoanalysis to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness,* Western Europe considers itself to be superior over the African natives due to imposition of restraint over the subconscious “death instinct,” a desire to destroy groupings of civilizations and return to a primitive state. When Kurtz is removed from Europe’s societal constructions designed to create a conscience superior to the death instinct, his violent and aggressive desires completely consume him. Thus, the superiority of the Europeans through subjugation of the death instinct is proven false. However, Conrad indicates through Charlie Marlow’s perpetuation of civilization’s false supremacy that such subconscious repression is necessary in order to prevent destruction of societal structure. Within *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad condemns the Imperialistic conquests that attempt to reinforce false superiority through repression, exposing the irony of the way in which supposedly “civilized” men resort to the destruction of indigenous groupings in order to protect against the perceived threat of the death drive.

Freud attributes civilization’s repression of instinctual desires to the necessity of protection against outside threats, and through Kurtz’s lack of repression Conrad indicates that it is imperialism, characterized by the fulfillment of violent and aggressive tendencies, that leads to demolition of the basis of civilization. English literature professor Al Drake, in summarizing Freud’s work *Civilization and Its Discontents,* indicates that “Faced with grave threats from external nature, their own decaying bodies, and even their social arrangements, people have always had to renounce the immediate satisfaction of their innate desire for happiness” (Drake). In order to “settle for the most expedient means of avoiding pain,” it is necessary for “the extirpation or deadening of instinctual impulses or the shifting (i.e. "sublimation") of them into channels appropriate to the work of civilization” (Drake). In order to avoid confrontation with outside nature, society’s members must sacrifice their own animalistic desires for the greater good of protection. In repression of these desires, Freud argues that “besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state” (Drake). There are two opposing forces present within the human mind: a need for preservation of the species demonstrated through formation of societies and a subsequent desire to tear down all constructions and return to a natural existence. The instinct for preservation is deemed “Eros,” or the love instinct, while the instinct for destruction is deemed “Thanaos,” or the death instinct (Drake).Such opposition is demonstrated through Marlow’s choice of nightmares at the end of the novella: to either expose the savagery of Kurtz, which would illuminate the drive towards violent demolition inherent in all of humanity, or perpetuate the philanthropic guise of the Imperialist mission and continuing repressing the death instinct in order to protect the construction of civilized communities. Ironically, the conquests of imperialism result in the destruction of non-European societal constructions. As a result, the primal instinct for demolition as demonstrated by Imperialist ventures constitutes the same death drive that Imperialists seek to repress out of fear of societal collapse.

In Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow’s journey into the heart of the Congo feels like a nightmare, a horror in which civilization fails and mankind’s hidden desires manifest themselves in the form of conquest and destruction. The Europeans revert to a primal, unrestrained sort of behavior when stripped of the external scaffolding that is civilization; and it is this unknown, second side of man that is embodied by Mr. Kurtz, who, in Freudian psychoanalytical terms, is the personification of the id. When stripped of society, the Europeans revert to a primal, id- driven state than in many ways is even more savage than that of the so-called “savages”, exposing the falseness for Western claims to superiority. Through Conrad’s systematic presentation and undercutting of the mask of European intention in the Congo, and through Marlow’s simultaneous awareness of both the lie of hierarchy and European necessity for it, Conrad argues that any rationale behind Western imperialism is completely unjustified because there is no inherent superiority to mankind. Yet, Marlow’s decision to perpetuate the lie, and consequently to perpetuate European hierarchal society, ironically suggests that it would be even more horrible if the lie were exposed. For people to become aware of this “second self” and the implications of non-distinction that come with it would shatter the entire foundation of Western society, a horror “too dark— too dark altogether” (Conrad 164) to be comprehended.

The subjective nature of morality in civilization destroys the hierarchal idea that European imperialism is founded upon. By its very nature, civilization requires repression. It sets up basic rules and constructs for its members to follow, and dictates the content of a person’s moral judgments. From a Freudian standpoint, then, civilization molds a person’s superego, the part of a person’s psyche that “almost seems to be outside of the self” (Murfin 114). The function of the superego is inherent, but “much of what it tells us to do or think is what we have learned from our parents, our schools, or our religious institutions” (Murfin 114). Thus, our morals are dictated to us by external sources, a concept that has huge implications for the European claim of inherent superiority in *Heart of Darkness.* If our morals are subjective and are what formulates our ideas of right and wrong, then superiority cannot be inherent because it is based upon a learned, not intrinsically developed, moral code. Freud also introduces the concept of the id, an ever-present, biologically-driven part of the mind that must be repressed in order for society to function properly. Conversely, the id flourishes, as can be seen by the European entrance into the wild Congo, when the trappings of civilization are ripped away. The id manifests itself in European greed for ivory and their cruelty to the supposed savages, though the Europeans have all the outward appearance of goodness.

A major indication of the European possession of an id can be found through the comparison of the Central Station men to “faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence” (91). The word “pilgrim” implies religious and moral motivations, and when paired with the word “faithless”, the professed philanthropic intentions of the men are cast as false and hypocritical. When they are out of Europe and in the Congo, the rules of civilization cannot be enforced, and they become more inclined to act on their previously repressed desires. Conrad suggests that repression, though necessary for civilization, can have damaging consequences. Essentially, “repression creates what might be called a second self, a stranger within” (Rivkin 119). What this suggests is that from birth we are trained to control our primal desires in order to fit in with the rules and moral constructs of society. But this repression creates a “second self” that exists only in our unconscious; an unknown portion of ourselves that has the capability to manifest itself in very dark and damaging ways. In *Heart of Darkness,* European society is built on this repression, but in the wild, untamed nature of the Congo, the id manifests itself in European greed for ivory.

Some Titles

Actions Speak Louder Than Words: The Falsity of Logocentric Philosophy in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

The Façade of Social Hierarchy and Language: A Lacanian Perspective on *Heart of Darkness*

The Necessary Evil of Civilization? A Freudian Reading of *Heart of Darkness*

The Horror of Patriarchy:

A Feminist Study of *The Heart of Darkness*

The Falsity of Imperialism: A Deconstructionist Analysis of *Heart of Darkness*