A Fall from Language in *Heart of Darkness*

By

Hiroyoshi, Mochizuki*

(Received February 27, 2009/Accepted June 12, 2009)

Summary: The purpose of this study is to show how the narrative devices, such as narrators and the narrative structure, mirror Conrad’s self-conscious concern with ‘nature of language’, i.e. vulnerability of language to nomenclatural substitutability in the act of storytelling and in the process of translating told-story into written language, by exclusively focusing on discussion of Marlow’s lie to “the Intended” in relation to Conrad’s presentation of written narrative through oral narrative in nineteenth century imperial context in *Heart of Darkness*.

Key words: substitutability of language, language in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad, narrative perspectives, John A. Bisazza, neurolinguistics

Preface

I hope to be able to show how Conrad’s narrative device mirrors the very nature of language; the jump that language detaches itself from what it names.

*Heart of Darkness* has been discussed from various points of view, which should be summed up into, broadly speaking, three different approaches: A study that takes up the psychological and ethical approach that the narrative seeks to cast light on man’s innermost within, as represented in the pioneer criticism “The Journey Within” by Albert J. Guerard, another influential current of studies that focuses on political and ideological aspects of *Heart of Darkness*, such as a veracious critique of the British Empire The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad by Eloise Knapp Hay, an attack on Conrad as a racist in “An Image of Africa” by an African critic Chinua Achebe, and a post-colonial criticism “Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*” by Edward W. Said. Lastly, the other current of criticisms on *Heart of Darkness*, fewer yet newer, is an analysis of language in *Heart of Darkness* in terms of narratology, which has been explored by Jeremy Hawthorn, Peter Brooks, Paul Wake, and so on. This study mainly follows the third current, while not overlooking the second, to finally interpret Marlow’s lie to the Intended in relation to Conrad’s use of language in nineteenth century imperial context.

I gratefully dedicate this paper to the late Professor, John A. Bisazza, who in his life time gave me brilliant inspirations about Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* especially in the linguistic lights, from which I have benefited to gain strong motives to write about Conrad again. Thank you, John.

An atypical seaman’s yarn

E.M. Forster’s criticism of Conrad’s fiction that appeared in *Abinger Harvest* shows the exasperation over its non-conventionality that makes it pseudo-philosophical:

Our impertinence is rebuked; sentence after sentence discharges its smoke screen into our abashed eyes, yet the problem isn’t settled really. Is there not also a central obscurity, something noble, heroic, beautiful, inspiring half a dozen great books; but obscure, obscure? While reading the half-dozen books one doesn’t or shouldn’t ask such a question, but it occurs, not improperly, when the author professes to be personal, and to take us into that confidence of his. [...] the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel [...] we need not try to write him down philosophically, because there is, in this particular direction, nothing to write. No creed, in fact. Only opinions, and the right to throw them overboard when facts make them look absurd. Opinions held under the semblence of eternity, girt with the sea, crowned with the star, and therefore easily mistaken for a creed.

* English Language Studies at Tokyo University of Agriculture
The anonymous narrator’s characterization of the primary narrator in *Heart of Darkness* may well be able to give a solution to Forster’s perplexity and to the question if there is no creed in the pseudo philosophical framework. Marlow is not such a typical seaman who leads “a sedentary life” and does not represent “the stay-at-home order” of most seamen’s minds. The anonymous narrator’s view of Marlow the primary narrator works as a significant preamble, and he narrates that Marlow’s yarn is not like most seamen’s, which is likened to “the shell of a cracked nut” that promises the audience “a kernel” in it when he goes on:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.2

Marlow’s yarn is not actually that of the typical seaman, so it does not have “a kernel”/creed. The meaning lies outside the tale “in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.” Marlow is destined to become a narratee when his yarn is narrated by someone else who wants to understand reality of human experiences, yet groping for “the meaning of an episode” which is “not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze”. The “haze” or what Forster calls “vapour” is Marlow’s self-consciousness as a narrator when trying to transfix reality of experience, which causes dislocations of language. The “haze”, “vapour” or “misty halos”, in other words, Conrad’s mystifying way of presenting narratives seems to give the philosophical undertones, but it actually reflects Conrad’s self-consciousness with the written language, i.e., literary language as against the seaman’s technical language, which has unequivocal meaning, the absolute one-to-one relation between signifier and signified. Handing over narrative from a narrator to a listener who is going to be another narrator is a transference of narrative hermeneutics, and this process dramatizes the writer’s self-conscious concerns with the act of translating one’s experience into a common language, the written narrative.

The anonymous narrator introduces Marlow also by saying “He did not represent his class” and “was a wanderer too”. A seaman from the English middle-class. His aunt, who knows “the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,” etc., etc”, helps him get an opportunity to get a job to realize “a glorious idea” in Africa, underwrites his bourgeois background. Her Victorian bourgeois vision is well reflected when she talks about “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” and also says that “the labourer is worthy of his hire”.4 Being a wanderer, however, is interpreted to mean that he is not fully incorporated into the imperial system that teaches the nationality based on power and wealth in disregard for other politically, economically (not culturally) lesser societies in foreign lands outside Europe. Marlow is standing a bit away, not confidently, from those creatures of his time who never doubt the ideal value of the Victorian glorious work of progress, so his narrative is not the conventional yarn that guarantees a rationalized solution in the ending, the wisdom lying at journey’s end. The unconventionality of his narrative is epitomized in Marlow’s report to Kurtz’s fiancé in *Heart of Darkness*, which can be read as “a mockery of storytelling and ethics”5 when Marlow tells her Kurtz’s last word although readers know what Kurtz actually “cried”.

There is no universal creed or unequivocal ethical message to share among readers in Marlow texts, and Conrad’s art of narrative especially in *Heart of Darkness* mirrors the arbitrary aspect of human language that words can tell lies. *Heart of Darkness* is the apex of this Conradian representation of language in Marlow texts. After entering Marlow in “Youth”, the first-person narrative device which is said to be, according to Oxford Reader’s Companion to Conrad, “Conrad’s autobiographical alter ego”6, Conrad often relies on Marlow to write the arbitrary word-world. In other words, Marlow dramatizes concerns and self-consciousness about the writing process itself.

F.R. Leavis takes Marlow for a “specific concretely and realized point view”7 while A.J. Guérard regards Marlow as “false psychology over his [Conrad’s] own truer intuitions.”8 At a certain level of narrative where he serves as a steamboat captain, Marlow appears the definite point of view or substitute psychology bringing readers to the journey within, but other narrative spheres should not be overlooked and will deserve a full attention.

**Narrative structure of Heart of Darkness**

Multiple narrative layers in *Heart of Darkness* are like Chinese boxes: 1) The first level of layers in *Heart of
Heart of Darkness, that is to say, the core, has the original story of Kurtz, just a topic often talked about, a collection of topics gossiped about by such people as the Company’s chief accountant, a young first-class agent/a brick maker, the manager, and a young Russian harlequin/Kurtz’s disciple; and posthumously, his cousin, a journalist and his girl. Kurtz is just a word, which can tell various images and so many meanings; e.g. the Company’s hope, the elite agent on whom the future of the Company depends, a great painter, an eloquent writer, a European genius to whose making all Europe contributed, a greedy ivory hunter, a scoundrel, a remarkable man, and posthumously known as a great musician, a man “whose proper sphere ought to have been politics ‘on the popular side’”, a kind of man whom it was impossible to know without admiring him, but who was, possibly, not so rich enough to persuade her people to approve of their engagement. 

A Marlow in his own experience or adventure, playing the role of a central figure in the narrative, exemplified in those concurrent action scenes, such as where he is in the middle of the dense fog, “howling” at him, or as in the middle of the ambush when he loses the native helmsman, takes up the position of the second layer of the narrative.  

3) Next layer of narrative is Marlow’s composition of the original Kurtz’s story after collecting the correlative chains of knowledge and episodes evolving around Kurtz all through his adventure in Africa and putting together those pieces of information in reminiscence.  

4) The last layer of the narrative has a Marlow as a narratee, along with the other narratees, the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, the Accountant, on board the Nellie, in the frame of the anonymous narrator’s mind. The third layer, Marlow’s version of Kurtz’s story is the dramatization of narrative, and he gingerly takes steps to participate in the act of narrating in his own verbatim, overusing adjectives with the negative prefix, such as “inscrutable”, “inconceivable”, “unspeakable”, which the eagle-eyed Leavis points out as “adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery”, and demurs “yet still they recur.” Just because Marlow is incapable of improving his grammar, Leavis speaks up that “CONRAD must here stand convicted of borrowing the arts of the magazine-writer (who has borrowed his, shall we say, from Kipling and Poe) in order to impose on his readers and on himself, for thrilled response, a ‘significance’ that is merely an emotional insistence on the presence of what he can’t produce.” However, it is not CONRAD but Marlow the narrator who is telling the audience what he cannot get to or what he barely knows in his composition of the narrative at the third layer of the narrative. Leavis concludes that “he [CONRAD] is intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means.” Hay is well aware that “the virtue is, in fact, in Marlow’s not knowing what he means.” Marlow cannot see clearly what he sees, and in the end Kurtz can see it clearly. Referring to the letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, in which CONRAD states his love of Marionettes, Hay remarks that “as the [Japanese] Bunraku puppeteer moves behind his marionette, immense and shrouded in black, CONRAD has sky and jungle, geography and history, on the move behind Marlow in Heart of Darkness.” Especially at the second layer, in such concurrent scenes that give a sense of being there, like suspense in the fog and action when the natives attack after it clears out, self-conscious Marlow disappears and CONRAD “shrouded in black”, least visible, is busy on the move behind Marlow the protagonist. At this layer of narrative Conrad’s impressionism is working in terms of things seen and unseen alternatively, to convey the effects of the subject Marlow as a narrative device sees or does not see, rather than to achieve the semblance to the substantial entity of the subject. 

Anonymous narrator’s comment on Marlow before Marlow’s narrative starts elucidates what E.M. Forster calls “a vapour” and functions as a preamble that Marlow’s yarn is not the transmittance of the secret worth knowing and that it is the dramatization of narrative, which does not concern itself with transference of a certain ethical message in terms of nomenclature. Heart of Darkness demonstrates the vulnerability of language to substitutability that directs the storyteller or the audience to substitution for a slot between experience and language. In the light of that, it is significant that the narrative breaks off with Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s fiancée.

The narrator-protagonist is retold as a narratee by one of the audience at the fourth layer of the narrative, and the meaning of experience is left out. The anonymous ‘I’ is the narrator who mostly shares Marlow’s understanding of the Congo and the death of Kurtz, but is still a different seaman, who distinguishes Marlow as a unique seaman who always puts an emphasis on what he saw rather than what it means. The captain of the Nellie, who serves as a host, a Conway boy, “trust-worthiness personified” is least likely to become a narrator of the fourth layer of the narrative because of his obtuseness to reality of human experience in other consciousnesses, and the limitation of his imagination as a creature of time is well reflected in his words in the ending “we have lost the first of the ebb”, reminding that ‘let’s get down to our business in the real world’,
that is, in the Euro-centric imperial world, which is obtuse to an other culture resisting it.

**Narrative perspectives**

The art of narrative in *Heart of Darkness* is rendered in terms of alternation of the seen and the unseen. Conrad’s art of narrative sometimes does not show the integrated meaning out of what the narrator sees and other times shows pictures out of what the narrator does not see. Marlow sees two women, one fat and the other slim, seated on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool in the Belgian Company’s office, but is unable to define the sinister imagery.15

On entering Africa, Marlow sees two farces. One is his encounter with names of the places. He “passed various places — trading places — with names like Gran’ Bassam and Little Popo, names that seemed to belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth”16 while the political aspects are withheld from readers. Such names of the ports as Grand Bassam and Grand Popo17 in French West Africa suggest that the first insertion point of his mission to the Belgian Congo is Cote d’Ivoire, that is to say, the Ivory Coast, which is the central issue of the original story at the first layer of the narrative. And he passes “some more places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthy atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb”.18 Death of the natives and Europeans is overflowing, and the Victorian glorious work of slavery and exploitation is in progress, but behind the scenes, in some other places those deaths have come from. Marlow witnesses “black shapes” are “dying slowly” in the grove,19 and “the body of a middle-aged Negro, with a bullet hole in the forehead”20 on the road, while Conrad does not show why they have to die and where their deaths come from.

The Fresleven episode is not a seen episode, but the narrative shows the vivid picture of the process through which death comes to him. Fresleven is the first death image, accidentally killed in a scuffle with the natives through misunderstanding about two black hens.21 All the information about this man is presented through hearsay. The Dane named Fresleven is just a name. His death has provided an opportunity for Marlow to get his appointment to take command of the steamboat going up the river in the Belgian Congo.

Death gives a start for the mission. Although the name “Fresleven” protrudes itself in the text, he is not there when Marlow meets him; he is already mere remnants of the body with “the grass growing through his ribs”, “tall enough to hide his bones.” The death is hearsay. Marlow does not see but hears that crewmen on the French warship are “dying of fever at the rate of three
a-day”. He hears about a Swede who hanged himself because of “the sun too much for him, or the country perhaps.” Although Marlow does not witness their deaths, Conrad shows the climate of the Congo, which is deadly to the mental and physical health of those who come from European continent, and constructs semantic tableaux of, more presumably, something deadlier going on among the civilized European colonialists.

Whether Marlow sees or does not see, death is presented as the irrational to the metropolis-dwellers, because the name death detaches itself from what it means to those who live in the metropolis with the police round one corner and the butcher round another. Marlow says that it is impossible for those “surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums” to understand or even imagine “what particular region of the first ages a man’s untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman—by the way of silence—utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion”. At this point Conrad presents language “as a system of police.” Peter Brooks observes, “Incorporate with the polis, language forms the basis of social organization (which itself functions as a language) as a system of difference, hence of distinction and restraint, which polices individuality by making it part of a transindividual, intersubjective system: precisely what we call society.” Language means nothing outside the polis and policing system. The word death in Africa is detached from what it names, what Europeans believe it to be; i.e. the ideal value it provides for Europeans that death should be paid a specific dignity and respect. More horrible awareness is that the detachment takes place in the mind of the European colonists and colonialists. During the insertion of the soldiers and the custom-house clerks, nobody seems to care that some go on to eat. Marlow’s aversion to facing Kurtz at that time is no less miserable than the others. Marlow reserves what death means to him, and his uneasiness reflected in his words “What! Dead?” toward the dying agent testifies his belief in consistency of the meaning of the word death with what he believes it to be. Later, he loses the consistency of the effect of the word. Marlow is at Kurtz’s deathbed confession, but he does not go to the deathbed when he dies, and goes on with his dinner, saying “I believe I was considered brutally callous. However, I did not eat much.” Marlow has seen too many deaths, and the last one is no less miserable than the others. Marlow admits he is getting used to and indifferent to those miserable deaths, but cannot become so detached as to go on to eat. Marlow’s aversion to facing Kurtz at the final moment is caused by his compulsion to stick to desperate belief in the word-world, i.e. Kurtz as a topic on everyone’s lips who is involved in the imperialist scheme, rather than in the torrid, harsh realities he actually faces.

**Language in Heart of Darkness**

The art of narrative to make readers see by means of speaking withholds one while showing another. This alternation is engendered by the jump that language detaches itself from what it names. A fall from language gives Marlow a motive for narrating, which
exposes Conrad’s use of language in *Heart of Darkness*. To understand the effects of language in *Heart of Darkness*, it is worth looking at how Kurtz’s fiancé is presented in the text and at its effect.

It is significant to note that from the first time Marlow mentions the girl to the end of the narrative, her very name is withheld in the text. When he experiences disillusionment of the achievement and absurdity of his mission, Marlow the narrator stops short, repeating the word “absurd” six times, and then introduces her by saying, “Girl! What? Did I mention a girl?” Ever since, the girl is referred to as Kurtz’s “Intended” until Marlow meets her in person at the final moment of his narrative.

Right after he faces reality of death, the most real one of all the deaths he knows in Africa, when the native helmsman is down with a spear in a pool of blood, when his shoes are full of blood, one of which he flung overboard at the height of desperate, exasperated feelings, Marlow guesses that Kurtz must be dead by this time. He feels disappointed at the strong possibility of losing his destiny, and the disappointment makes him feel absurd. He has a sense of absurdity that they have lost human life for nothing, by means of the primitive weapons such as “some spear, arrow, or club” in spite of the modern weapons like Winchester rifles they carry with them, ending up in squirting lead into the bush. Marlow seems disappointed at the way he has lost human life, rather than the loss itself because he throws his blood-soaked shoe overboard, a blood-stained symbol of civilization, which shows his sudden impulse to expel the image of ineffectiveness of civilization rather than to exorcise the death image.

The most absurd moment comes, however, when something irrational hinders his rational intention: he wants “talking with” Kurtz.

There was a sense of extreme disappointment, as though I had found out I had been striving after something altogether without a substance. I couldn’t have been more disgusted if I had traveled all this way for the sole purpose of talking with Mr Kurtz. Talking with ...

Marlow discovers that he never connects Kurtz with any other action, and that what he has been looking forward to is a talk with Kurtz. This reflects Marlow’s belief in the common social basis they are on and the common language he shares with this gifted, privileged European. But Kurtz turns out to be at the point of no return to his social basis on which the law and order of policing system is enacted, because he himself has become the rules of policing. Kurtz speaks the least intelligible and insane language, only in those words and phrases like “My ivory, station, my river” or “we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, ’must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings — we approach them with the might as of a deity,’ and so on, and so on.”

Marlow introduces the girl as the one that should be out of absurdity, right after he tells that he feels his hope might be shattered in the middle of nowhere in Africa and puts this absurdity as a contrast against rationality and sense of human decency represented by metropolis life where:

“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 ever after, he mentions her by the name of “the Intended” in relation to Kurtz’s personal properties; “My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my — everything belonged to him.” After Kurtz’s death, everything has been lost except for “his Intended”:

“All that had been Kurtz’s had passed out of my hands: his soul, his body, his station, his plans, his ivory, his career. There remained only his memory and his Intended”.

Being left with a pack of letters and the girl’s portrait, Marlow wants to bury all that remains into oblivion. “With no clear perception of what it was I really wanted”, he went to see her. It is noteworthy that she is expecting Marlow as she says, “I had heard you were coming” and that she believes blindly Marlow must have heard Kurtz speak. At last, she cries, “… Who was not his friend who had heard him speak once?”, “But you have heard him! You know!” She insists on having the spoken message when she says, “Something must remain. His words, at least, have not died.” She is a believer in transmission of the spoken language, rather than of the written language like the letters and writings Kurtz left.

It is more significant to note that the girl is referred to as such a pronoun like “she”, and is no longer called by the name “the Intended” during the meeting with Marlow. The faceless girl in mourning, all in black, has “survived” without a person who realizes the meaning and status of the word “Intended”. She has lost one last
name in the ending of the narrative.

Marlow seems to choose the conventional ending by giving her what she wants when he reports to her, “The last word he pronounced was your name.” The text withholding her very name, only leaving what Kurtz actually pronounced, “the horror, the horror” reverberating in the ending. Accordingly, the ending of the narrative has a gap between what readers actually heard and what the narrator named. Marlow gives the girl what she wants whereas the text reveals truth left out. Marlow the narrator, who is an atypical creature of his time, doubtful of what he sees and self-conscious of what he narrates, finally surrenders to the conventional ending because he has no idea what lies beyond Kurtz’s death while language in the text shows the unconventionality of the ending in *Heart of Darkness.*

**Marlow’s lie to the Intended**

Up stream journey, going up against the rapid current at the crawling speed of the steam-engine boat to get to the intended goal is like conveying the reality of one’s dream in vain, like naming things that are incessantly falling from language; the act of translating experience through articulation. Once the goal is obtained, it fails what is spoken of. An insane white man who has succumbed to the wilderness, who let the primordial instinct get the better of him. A greedy hunter-gatherer of ivory, who would be a king among the natives. The imagery that “all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” lies in spoken words. With Kurtz dying on board, at the second layer of the narrative, Marlow is going down the river in “twice the speed of our upward progress,” speeding toward the ending, in which Marlow is acting as a legate carrying some precious message, and thus, at the third layer of the narrative, back home from the Congo, Marlow’s composition of the life of Kurtz breaks off with Marlow’s lie to the Intended, which leaves a large open space for truth. At the third layer, Marlow seems to give an integration to his report to Kurtz’s Intended by covering up what he has witnessed from her in order to keep his promise with a Russian young man, Kurtz’s disciple, in order to defend Kurtz’s reputation. On the surface, in responding to the disciple’s anxiety, expressed in such words like “it would be awful for his reputation if anybody here - “, Marlow seems to have “promised a complete discretion with great gravity.”

Paris concludes that one of Marlow’s primary motives for telling a tale comes from his lie to Kurtz’s Intended, from the obsession that he has withheld truth from her. Since he cannot destroy her illusions, Marlow chooses to cover up truth, but “he is haunted by the lie he has told the Intended.” “In order to free himself both of Kurtz and his false position, he must tell the truth about Kurtz, rendering him the justice that is his due.” According to Paris, Marlow is obsessed by the moral compunction because he did what he hates, so the act of narrating is redemption and atonement to him. If Paris’ view is understood in relation to the division of the narrative layers suggested in this study, it goes that Marlow’s motivation for narrating, so to speak, the moral compunction is caused by his deliberate concealment of truth from her ever since back home from the Congo in the second layer of the narrative, and that in the third layer, in his yarn before the audience on the *Nellie,* Marlow wants to be more faithful to what he has done than what he felt and now feels, so there is a dilemma between what he has told and what he feels he had to tell. If he feels any compunction or dilemma, it is not moral but linguistic one. There is no reason that Marlow feels guilty toward the Intended if his lie covers up what she loathes and protects her from darkness outside English bourgeois life, which he does not represent but is not against. Rather, Marlow is obsessed with the gap he left out, which he hasn’t been able to put in words because he cannot name what lies beyond the death of Kurtz. In the fourth layer and thereafter, when translating Marlow’s speech into an intelligible language, the listener-narrator ‘I’ notices there is no kernel but an empty space in his yarn, a space that language fails to name, and the unnamable to name.

Before the girl, Conrad imposes limitation on Marlow and makes him choose the conventional ending by covering up Kurtz’s last words because the Intended is a believer in the conventional pattern of transmission of narrative from person to person, so his choice is let her live in her illusions that “Something must remain. His words, at least, have not died.” R.A. Gekoski reads Marlow’s lie as an exorcism of darkness by his report “the last word he pronounced was your name”, so that she should be sustained in her illusion, and will be able to carry on with life sustained by her only life-lie. Furthermore, GEKOSKI calls attention to “a final ironic possibility” in Marlow’s lie, that is, “the horror” and the name of Kurtz’s Intended may be identical. Since a proper name for her is not provided anywhere in the text, therefore, what is suggested here in the last paragraph of Gekoski’s study is substitutability of language.

If the ultimate truth Marlow has acquired is that “the essentials of experience remain amoral and even alinguistic” as James Guetti sums up, Marlow’s narrative in presence of the four seamen is not the tradition-
The part in which Marlow expresses his antipathy for the images of the house collapsing and the heavens likely to be related to the ending in which Marlow sees about Marlow. His antipathy toward lies in general is when he let a first-class agent believe whatever he likes "there is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies" presses his antipathy to lies in general and opines that the text; Marlow's lie to the Intended is often discussed in relation to one of the deceptive codes in Intended. for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments.

particular name is in the text, except for "the which Marlow comments that "these were the subjects the last word he pronounced was your name". And a "My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas", on

mention that Marlow lied to her. He "spoke slowly" that Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my - " , again,

naming truth. Moreover, there is no textural denota-

tion that Marlow lied to reveal truth, Marlow does not exactly tell a Kurtz himself utters "my Intended" in the context proper name is given to what should properly be matrimonial context to imply that she is Kurtz's fiancé. It is Marlow who repeatedly refers to the girl in his own glorious plans, uttering such words as "My

lie. Conrad provides the audience with a slot for where he refers to those things he claims his ownership did not have to be a fall from truth. If the deliberate misuse of language to conceal truth is a lie, again, if a proper name is given to what should properly be named to reveal truth, Marlow does not exactly tell a lie. Conrad provides the audience with a slot for naming truth. Moreover, there is no textural denotation that Marlow lied to her. He "spoke slowly" that "the last word he pronounced was your name". And a particular name is not given in the text, except for "the Intended".

The lie is creation in Conrad's criticism as it is often discussed in relation to one to the deceptive codes in the text; Marlow's lie to the Intended is often discussed in relation to the scene in which Marlow expresses his antipathy to lies in general and opines that "there is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies" when he let a first-class agent believe whatever he likes about Marlow. His antipathy toward lies in general is likely to be related to the ending in which Marlow sees the images of the house collapsing and the heavens falling upon his head when he reports to the Intended. The part in which Marlow expresses his antipathy for lies in general tends to be related to the self-destructive images of the collapsing house and heavens falling down in the last part to reinforce an interpretation that Marlow is shocked and afflicted by moral compunction because he tells a lie, which he says smacks of mortality.

The girl who appears as a person engaged to Kurtz is just a name, not a proper name that substantiates an individual but the faceless name, "the Intended", masking personality and sex, which signifies a vague concept, something planned and intended. In addition to the anonymity of the girl, another substitution is her status for her relation to Kurtz. The often-quoted phrase "Kurtz's Intended" is uttered by Marlow in referring to her, meaning Kurtz's fiancé, but there is no such word as fiancé all through the text or anything that implies their engagement in Kurtz's words and no indication that they are to get married except in Marlow's words. Only once in the ending the word "engagement" appears, and then Marlow refers to their hardship by saying that "I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people" because "he wasn't rich enough or something." This rather implies the failure of engagement. Marlow goes on, "And indeed I don't know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there." Marlow's retrospective comment about Kurtz's motive for going out to Africa further discourages the prospect of the matrimonial future of Kurtz and this girl.

It is Marlow who repeatedly refers to the girl in matrimonial context to imply that she is Kurtz's fiancé. Kurtz himself utters "my Intended" in the context where he refers to those things he claims his ownership in his own glorious plans, uttering such words as "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my - " again, "My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas", on which Marlow comments that "these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments". Those names for things Kurtz possesses are identical to and interchangeable with each other. The substitutability of names is not confined to Kurtz's possession. To the crew on the French warship "natives" are "enemies" and "criminals"; to the Europeans who propels the colonialism the natives are "niggers", "slaves", and "unhappy savages"; "passengers" on board the French steamer turn out to be "soldiers" and "custom clerks"; the pilgrims are "buccaneers" and "a species of wandering trader"; "a harlequin" turns out "a Russian young man", "Kurtz's disciple", finally "a simple man"; such a name as first-class agent of the Company is
interchangeable with brick maker; and Mr Kurtz has various names like “the scoundrel”, “the gifted, privileged European”, “a remarkable man” and so on.

Back to the metropolis “sepulchral city”, Marlow feels “so sure they [metropolis-dwellers] could not possibly know the things I knew”, and he is not only irritated at the urban people “going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety” but also has “some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces”. His irritation and sudden repulsive feelings toward those who live under the precarious, vulnerable illusion of bourgeois stability invite recurrent images of “the beat of the drum” and “the phantom bearers” with the decorative lofty European house.

It is not uncommon in Conrad’s criticism to say that the images of the collapsing house and the falling heavens are those of shattered intention of European imperialism as contrast to such collateral persistent images as “the beat of the drum” Marlow hears and “the phantom bearers” he sees before he enters the lofty European house as he puts it “the vision seemed to enter the house with me”. “[A] lofty drawing-room with three long windows from floor to ceiling that were like three luminous and bedraped columns” and with “the tall marble fireplace” that has “a cold monumental whiteness” of her house is suggestive of European dignity and affluence. And she is part of it. C.B. Cox observes that “we have already seen how her home is a graveyard” and that “her life is based on hypocrisy, like the European civilization in which she has been nurtured”, pointing out that her devotion to Kurtz is self-deception. From “her fair hair, pale visage and pure brow, her mature capacity for fidelity, belief and suffering”, Benita Parry regards the girl as “the emblem of Europe’s religious traditions and the symbol of an imperialism saved by visionary desires.”

Such images of the subverted foundation as “the house would collapse before I escape” and “the heavens would fall upon my head” come right after Marlow “spoke” to the Intended that “the last word he pronounced was your name”, and they imply Marlow’s awareness of the collapse of the foundation, upon which system of naming things works safely. Until then, language works under the precarious assurance of safety, under the pretence and illusion of eternal relationship between the signifiers and the signified. Those destructive images mirror Marlow’s recognition of the vulnerability, and at the same time substitutionality, of language. If her name is the last word Kurtz pronounced, as Marlow reports to her in person that he utters “your name”, the only one name she possesses assumes the equivalent value to Kurtz’s last cry “the horror, the horror”. “Your name” is the horror; “the Intended” is the horror. This substitutability of language in Heart of Darkness should be endorsed by Ian Watt’s conclusion that Heart of Darkness embodies the ultimate direction of nineteenth century thought, summed up by Sartre in his vision of human destiny that man’s plan is to become God.

When Kurtz dies, and when Marlow’s narrative breaks off with his seemingly strange report to her, the word “the Intended” is hanging in the air. The name loses the object to which relation it is intended to realise. When the context of situation alters, the name for the girl falls from its status. In relation to imperialism and illusions it provides in a process of thriving, Jeremy Hawthorn sums up, “The Intended represents the human capacity for imaginative illusions, for escaping from the concrete.” If Marlow’s reproduction of imperialist’s illusions is for her, as Hawthorn puts it “Marlow is forced to reproduce her illusions for her, and thus to take part in reproducing the half-ignorance upon which imperialism thrives”, he is conniving with imperialism, but it is worth attention that the reproduction of imperialist’s illusions is finally for readers with a different touch through the detachment of so many layers in narrative. It becomes the reproduction of imperialist’s disillusionment. In the contextual value that anything intended for progress and Reason is destined for the horror, which is the “unspeakable” revelation, her name becomes identical to the last word Kurtz pronounced. The dramatization of the narrative drives a narrator on the verge of substituting her tentative name “the Intended” for Kurtz’s last word “the horror, the horror”, and the identification of Kurtz’s last word with the outcome of the main current of nineteenth century thought comes at the climactic moment when language falls from its intended meaning, when a narrator hands off his own story to another and becomes a narratee.

Conclusion

Concerns with language and beyond

Heart of Darkness couldn’t be fully discussed without referring to a narrative situation given in “Youth”. A continuum of narrative situation from “Youth” to Heart of Darkness gives temporality, which reflects a change in Marlow’s concerns with language. It also shows a change in the anonymous narrator’s view on Marlow the narrator.

Marlow in both works has a particular audience brought together by the bond of the sea and they are in a particular occasion brought about by their common profession, with a space of time “six years or so” in
between. A director of companies, a lawyer, an accountant in "Youth" appear again on the Nellie in the Estuary, but this time the initials of their names are in uppercase, such as “the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, and the Accountant”. They are in the already established station in life, and all are employees of the imperial system as not only the names of their social roles but their bond of the sea suggest. Expansion of a nation’s power over foreign lands outside Europe is not realized without maritime people. They are also drawn from the business world, which is dependant on overseas resources for thriving, and their roles are imperatives for maintaining a successful business. This presentation of the narrative situation is, Said notes, "Conrad's way of emphasizing the fact that during the 1890s the business of empire, once an adventurous and often individualistic enterprise, had become the empire of business."

To reinforce that empire is the British empire, it is very tempting to refer to the anonymous narrator's statement in the first paragraph of "Youth"; "This could have occurred nowhere but in England, where men and sea interpenetrate, so to speak -- the sea entering into the life of most men knowing something or everything about the sea, in the way of amusement, of travel, or of breadwinning."

The narrative situation continues but not in the same linear direction. The temporality through these two works shows a change in the anonymous narrator’s recognition of Marlow as a narrator as well as a change in Marlow’s concerns with language. The anonymous narrator introduces Marlow as a storyteller telling “the story, or rather the chronicle of a voyage” in "Youth" and after six years or so later reintroduces him as an atypical narrator spinning a yarn that does not have a kernel inside. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow does not speak the seaman’s language based on the common experience as he did in "Youth" but speaks dubious language full of dislocations.

In “Youth”, the disillusionment ends up with romanticism; the disillusionment for the death of the young self, the death of twenty-year-old Marlow full of sea adventure reading, pursuing adventurous dreams and glory ever since he went to sea at the age of fourteen. Middle-aged Marlow knows what lies beyond youth, and knows what he is telling about. Therefore, the narrative takes firm, definite steps in a straightforward way to get to the nostalgia of youth, like the “international language” which is subservient to the actions it describes and ready to translate signs into action, the maritime duties. Conrad’s self-consciousness in translating speech into writing is already salient: “Youth” shows the act of translation of oral into written narrative when the anonymous narrator introduces Charlie Marlow and says he is not sure about the written version of his last name as there will be more than one type of spelling: "Marlow (at least I think that is how he spelt his name)" in the opening page. Marlow the narrator is conscious of the difference between speech and writing as he says, 'his name was Mahon, but he insisted that it should be pronounced Mann' while referring to a woman’s name in similar prosody ‘Miranda or Melissa — some such thing’. The Judea sounds queer to him while he does not care how her owner’s name sounds as he remarks: “Her name was the Judea. Queer name, isn’t it. She belonged to a man Wilmer, Wilcox — some name like that”. Marlow, thus Conrad is conscious of, and puts an emphasis on, the process in which the oral/aural language becomes the written language. In Heart of Darkness, Conrad’s self-conscious concern with language is about how the interlocution in the written language is interpreted.

Twenty two years later, forty-something Marlow still has “hankering” to go to “a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over” in Heart of Darkness. A straight Marlow, even in his forties, who wants to believe what he saw in his youth is going to be a dubious Marlow who expresses disbelief in communication of reality of what he saw in Africa in his dislocated language and, back from Africa, finally or most largely dislocates language in his interlocution with the Intended. Or rather, it is more like report than interlocution because she asks for what she wants and Marlow gives a name to it. Marlow the narrator breaks off in his narrative with his surrealistic images of the house and the heavens collapsing on his head, for he derails in the intelligible order of naming things.

Marlow demurs at communication in common language that “It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream — making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that comingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams...” and after a silence “No, it is impossible to convey the life sensation of any given epoch of one’s existence.” To get hold more of what it means, Martin Ray’s view on language in Heart of Darkness will work: “the dilemma in Heart of Darkness is Marlow’s conflict between a wish to communicate to his audience (in order to control or exorcize his experiences) and a knowledge that successful communication entails the annihilation of that language by which he seeks to support or re-establish a stable vision of reality.”


Marlow's speech is wordy about the world he has been through and he tries to name in vain the world he is yet to experience. Marlow in Heart of Darkness has no idea of what to make of Kurtz's last words and what lies beyond the death of imperialism, on which basis his time is enacted. Said states that Conrad with his Eurocentric vision did not know the non-imperial world when imperialism came to an end, when imperialism was circumscribed by a larger history, "and so Conrad left it empty." I disagree with Said when he says that Conrad did not know another world resisting imperialism. Conrad puts the barriers of language against the impending silence and at the same time leaves out an empty space for substitution of names. Marlow's report is ambiguous and "unnamable" because Marlow is a skeptical creature of his time but is not so sure as to be against it.

When the Nellie is circumscribed by darkness, Conrad seems to be ambiguous to European empires, as Ray points out "Conrad's attempt to erect a barrier of language against the impending silence is but one half of his ambiguous attitude to the forces of negation". The other half of his attempt is confronting silence. Silence in Heart of Darkness is not only negation of language but negating force against imperialism.

Conrad is ahead of Marlow, and of his time, to recognize what lies beyond, that is to say, opposing forces resistant to the imperial world, especially when he as a Ukraine, a son of the oppressed, writes Kurtz crying "the horror" and later writes about the residuum of empires, the terrorist-ridden Geneva and London back-streets. Conrad's use of language in Heart of Darkness is alternation of language and silence to make the most of the nature of language that never allows any space and always fills it with substitution.

Notes
3 ibid., 53.
4 ibid., 59.
5 Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 250.
9 Heart of Darkness, 154.
10 F.R. Leavis, 267.
11 op. cit.
14 Hay, 132.
18 op. cit.
19 ibid., 110.
20 ibid., 142.
21 ibid., 64.
22 ibid., 66.
23 ibid., 67.
24 ibid., 98.
25 ibid., 147.
26 ibid., 150.
28 Guerard already detected the imagery of death and mortuary in Heart of Darkness, Conrad the Novelist, 34–35.
29 Heart of Darkness, 66.
30 ibid., 71.
31 ibid., 53–54.
32 ibid., 62.
33 ibid., 63.
34 ibid., 116.
35 Peter Brooks, 251.
36 Heart of Darkness, 60–61.
38 Heart of Darkness, 61.
39 op. cit.
40 ibid., 69.
41 ibid., 115.
42 ibid., 114.
43 ibid., 113.
44 ibid., 118.
45 ibid., 114.
46 ibid., 116.
47 ibid., 115.
48 Peter Brooks, 251.
49 op. cit.
50 ibid., 159.
51 ibid., 160.
52 ibid., 147.
53 ibid., 139.
55 Marlow's antipathy toward a lie (Heart of Darkness, Dent, 82) is often discussed in relation to Marlow's report to the Intended in the ending.
56 Heart of Darkness, 160.
58 James Guetti, "Heart of Darkness: The Failure of Imag-
59 Peter Brooks, 255.
61 Hay, 129.
62 Heart of Darkness, 82.
63 ibid., 162.
64 ibid., 159.
65 op. cit.
66 ibid., 116.
67 ibid., 147.
68 ibid., 152.
69 ibid., 155.
70 ibid., 156.
73 Heart of Darkness, 162.
76 op. cit.
79 “Youth”, 5.
80 ibid., 8.
81 ibid., 5.
82 Heart of Darkness, 52.
83 ibid., 82.
85 Said, 24.
86 Martin Ray, 63–64.
「闇の奥」における語りの二重性—逸脱の言語

望 月 浩 義*

(平成 21 年 2 月 27 日受付/平成 21 年 6 月 12 日受理)

要約：中編『闇の奥』における語り手の発話言語をとおして、どのように小説家コンラッドが小説の言語を提示しているのかという点に着目し、言語の本質である表象するものと表象されるもののとの恣意的な関係性を作品の中で論じた。語られた言葉、そして書き残された言葉が、沈黙という空白をいかに埋めながらどのような意味を構築していくのかを考察した。『闇の奥』を論じる際に、主な論点のひとつとなる最終局面の語り手マーロウの「嘘」に焦点を絞り、彼の「嘘」はその原義の示すところの「真実でないことを語ること」という定義から外れ、その物語の独特な構造において、実は真実を伝えていることを論じた。ヨーロッパ帝国主義が基盤となっていた時代の中で、小説家コンラッドは語り手の言葉をテキストの中で再生成させることと帝国主義時代の幻想と真実を小説の言葉に語らせること、つまり語り手の言葉と小説のテキスト性がそれぞれに示す異なる意味の二重性を指摘した。

キーワード：コンラッド、語り手マーロウ、コンラッドの中編小説、小説の語り、『闇の奥』、ジョン A. ピサーザ

* 東京農業大学短期大学部教養分野英語教育・英語学・英文学専攻