

ang070 S/Ü "Introduction to the Critical and Scholarly Discussion of Literature"  
Assignment 3: "Analysing Fiction"

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki. Additionally, you can receive feedback in the office hours of your respective instructors.

Please make sure to submit your assignment stapled together but not bound in any folder. Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. Present your results in complete sentences. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet. Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored.

Analyse the following abbreviated passage:

"Next day I left that station at last, with a caravan of sixty men, for a two-hundred-mile tramp. No use telling you much about that. Paths, paths, everywhere; [...]. [20] I had a white companion too, not a bad chap, but rather too fleshy and with the exasperating habit of fainting on the hot hillsides miles away from the least bit of shade and water. Annoying, you know, to hold your own coat like a parasol over a man's head while he is coming to. I couldn't help asking him once what he meant by coming there at all. 'To make money, of course. What do you think?' he said scornfully. Then he got fever and had to be carried in a hammock slung under a pole. As he weighed sixteen stone I had no end of rows with the carriers. They jibbed, ran away, sneaked off with the loads in the night – quite a mutiny. So, one evening I made a speech in English with gestures, not one of which was lost to the sixty pairs of eyes before me, and the next morning I started the hammock off in front all right. An hour afterwards I came upon the whole concern wrecked in a bush – man, hammock, groans, blankets, horrors. The heavy pole had skinned his poor nose. He was very anxious for me to kill somebody, but there wasn't the shadow of a carrier near. I remembered the old doctor – 'It would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals on the spot.' I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting. However, all that is to no purpose. On the fifteenth day, I came in sight of the big river again and hobbled into [21] the Central Station. [...]" (Joseph Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. New York and London: Norton, 2006. 19-21)

### Formal and Media-specific Analysis

(1) Narration: Identify and categorize the narrator according to the typology of narrators.

- Charlie Marlow is the intradiegetic, homodiegetic narrator, tells the hypodiegetic narrative level, ulterior narration
- Degree of perceptibility:
  - Description of setting: "that station", "paths, paths, everywhere", "the hot hillsides miles away from the least bit of shade and water"; "in a bush"; "the big river", "the Central Station"
  - Temporal summary: "next day"; "once"; "one evening"; "the next morning"; "An hour afterwards"; "On the fifteenth day"
  - Identification: no identification by name
  - definition of characters:
    - "sixty men"; "sixty pairs of eyes"; "the carriers"; "the shadow of a carrier" (definitions: "jibbed", "quite a mutiny", "wrecked")

- "white companion" (definitions: "not a bad chap, but rather too fleshy and with the exasperating habit of fainting"; "he weighed sixteen stone"; "anxious for me to kill somebody")
- "the old doctor" (definition: as scientifically interested in the mental changes of explorers)
- Reports of what characters did not think or say: "not one of which was lost to the sixty pairs of eyes before me"
- Commentary: "No use telling you much about that."; "not a bad chap"; "Annoying, you know, to hold your own coat like a parasol over a man's head while he is coming to."; "quite a mutiny"; "However, all that is to no purpose."
- Reliability: personally involved (cf. homodiegetic; part of the colonial undertaking, seeking approval "you know"); limited knowledge; problematic value scheme marked by Marlow's (disappointed/disillusioned) assumption of racial hierarchies on various levels
  - His racial distinction between white individual vs. homogenous group of Congolese ("sixty men"), differentiated by quantity and by their function to the white individual ("the carriers") and repeated with references to their physical presence or absence ("sixty pairs of eyes"; "not a shadow of a carrier")
  - The failed attempt at a display of dominance through language (cf. linguistic colonialism; Greenblatt); Marlow's expectation of the effect of his speech stands in contrast to the described outcome of events
  - hint at possible "mental changes" and the doctor's interest in those
  - his evaluation of the white companion as "not a bad chap" stands in contrast to the man's harsh reaction and eagerness for punishment

(2) Focalization: Identify and comment on the use of (and the potential shifts in) focalization in the given passage.

- The dominant, internal focalization technique (signalled in this passage by past tense; immediacy of the experiencing self to the events) is interrupted by several shifts to external focalization (here signalled by present tense; commentary on the relevance of the story by narrating self, cf. comments above; addressing the other seamen on the boat/Thames):
  - "No use telling you much about that."
  - "Annoying, you know, to hold your own coat like a parasol over a man's head while he is coming to."
  - "However, all that is to no purpose."
  - Possibly also: "quite a mutiny", "not a bad chap"
- Focalizer: shifts several times from young, experiencing Marlow (i.e. in the Congo, marching towards Central Station) to old, narrating Marlow (i.e. in London, on the boat on the Thames)
- Focalized:
  - the internal focalizer Marlow focalizes
    - landscape (from outside: "paths, everywhere"; "the hot hillsides"),
    - the "white companion"
      - from within: "not a bad chap"; "anxious for me to kill somebody"
      - and from outside, e.g. physical appearance "too fleshy", "weighed sixteen stone"; behaviour: "the exasperating habit of fainting";
      - and a mix of both: "the whole concern wrecked in a bush – man, hammock, groans, blankets, horrors" (at first, from outside; but: "horrors" adds an additional insight)
    - "the carriers" (from outside only but implying a certain set of characteristics; mainly by behaviour: he has "rows" with them; "They

- jibbed, ran away, sneaked off ...", they "wrecked" the carried white man "in a bush" etc.)
    - Himself: Marlow as character focalizer/ experiencing self remembers a previous self (at the doctor's in Brussels): "I remembered the old doctor", "I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting" (from within)
  - the external focalizer Marlow focalizes
    - himself and the seamen on the boat on the Thames: "Annoying, you know, [...]" (from within)

(3) Characterization: Who is characterized by whom and with what technique?

- Marlow characterizes
  - the "companion" as
    - as Caucasian / colonizing European ("white", dir. def.)
    - a nice enough though unremarkable fellow ("not a bad chap", direct def.)
    - big boned/ heavy/ overweight/obese and inert/inactive/slow ("rather too fleshy" [ind. pres. external appearance.], "with the exasperating habit of fainting" [ind. pres. through actions], "he weighed sixteen stone" [ind. pres. through appearance], "he had to be carried in a hammock" [ind. pres., actions/omission])
    - sneering/impolite ("he said scornfully", ind. pres. speech)
    - sick ("fever", ind. pres. actions)
    - vengeful ("very anxious for me to kill somebody", ind. pres. actions)
  - "the carriers"
    - mostly indirect presentation; mostly through committed and omitted actions
      - As a mass / quantity ("sixty men")
      - A bodily presence / absence ("sixty pairs of eyes", "not a shadow of a carrier") but also fragmented / synecdoche
      - not submissive; resistant ("no end of rows with the carriers"; "quite a mutiny"; "the whole concern wrecked in a bush")
      - animalistic or creature-like, stubborn, guilty ("jibbed", "sneaked off")
  - the doctor
    - as aged, possibly experienced ("old", dir. def.)
  - And himself:
    - As exasperated with having to help the companion ("annoyed", direct def.; "I couldn't help asking"; ind. pres. actions)
    - Concerned for the white companion (or irony?) ("his poor nose", ind. pres. speech)
    - As mentally unstable/ changing ("I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting." direct def.)
    - As exhausted/ worn out ("hobbled", ind. pres. behaviour; the described manner of walking is analogous here to his manner of speech)
    - Through manner of speech as insecure/confounded (by commenting on the stories as non-important and yet delivering the accounts with some detail: "No use telling you much about that", "However, all that is to no purpose.")
    - Through characterizing others by making racial, hierarchical distinctions as someone who harbours such prejudices and world-view and perceives himself to be superior (cf. above; ind. pres., esp. "speech in English")
- Other characters characterizing themselves:
  - the "white companion" as greedy and interested in the exploitative undertaking of colonialism ("To make money, of course. What do you think?")

- "the doctor" as scientifically curious about the psyche of explorers, as someone with different stakes in colonial enterprise, i.e. not financial but knowledge ("It would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals on the spot")

**Functional Analysis: Toward a Problem-oriented Sample Analysis**

Build your functional analysis on the data generated through your formal analysis and suggest a possible problem orientation:

- (5) Identify a research problem.
- (6) Suggest one other passage from the novel that corresponds and/or contrasts with the given passage in an aspect relevant to the research problem you have specified.
- (7) Briefly discuss how both passages relate to this problem. Address potential differences in representation and their possible functions.