

# **Measuring Experience:**

**A Process and Participant analysis of *Heart of Darkness***

**by Joseph Conrad**

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## **Abbreviations**

HOD- Heart of Darkness

SFG- Systemic Functional Grammar

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## **Preface**

My main interest while studying the English language has always been connected to the aspect of meaning and how we use language in order to express ourselves in different ways. When I first started to study literature and linguistics at the University of Oslo, I was captivated by one of the introduction courses in British literature and my professor's apparent interest for what lies beneath a great work of art. Were the formal features reflections of the author's deliberate language choices or were they coincidental?

My new found interest for exploring literary meaning through linguistic features made me attend a course in Systemic Functional Grammar which provided my passion with a theory, thus allowing me to approach a literary text through meaning and form without ignoring the text's literary function. As I got accepted into the Master program, I was lucky enough to attend a class on narrative fiction, which opened my eyes to Joseph Conrad's puzzling novel *Heart of Darkness* and his highly complex writing style. The novel astonished and provoked me at the same time, leaving me with a desire to want to know more about the man and the novel, and most importantly; the language which reflected both. What started out as an attempt to find out more about the text, ended up as a restricted inquiry into some of Conrad's language choices in order to seek some of the linguistic features which might lie beneath the heart of darkness.

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Aim of the thesis

This is an interdisciplinary study within the fields of literature and linguistics of the usefulness of applying linguistic features to literary analysis.

Through the use of *Systemic Functional Grammar* (SFG) (Halliday 1994), I aim to explore the language and some of the narrative techniques used by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*. My goal is to examine the narrative in terms of style, textual function and narrative techniques by focusing on *process* and *participant types* according to the SFG system (see further Chapter 2). By analyzing selected passages from *Heart of Darkness* through the use of SFG, I wish to look further into how the characters' participation and actions affect the narrative, and how some of these grammatical choices may connect to various themes and interpretations linked to Conrad and issues concerning his view on Western imperialism in Africa.

In some of what have been considered by many to be extraordinary literary achievements, the language has created a particular effect which according to Toolan is no less than 'linguistic components of excellence' (Toolan 1998: ix). The effect Toolan here is referring to is very much present in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is one of the most famous and controversial novels of all time. The language has been heavily praised and criticised for everything from its divine complexity to racist remarks, and there are numerous amounts of different interpretations on *Heart of Darkness*. The novel's style belongs to the literary genre of *narrative fiction*, a genre which focuses on how we talk about our experiences in terms of storytelling. I will return to this aspect in Chapter 2 when I look at narrative theory in combination with SFG.

The focus on the use of language in literature is a useful approach in both literary and linguistic studies (Toolan 1998: ix). However, even though the study of language is central to the understanding of fiction, it is not common to analyze fiction in this manner. The use of grammatical analysis is often seen as an analytical tool in critical reading, and is therefore often limited to the field of stylistics as a minor addition to the literary analysis as a whole. The focus on grammar as a potentially bigger part of the understanding of fiction is therefore generally restricted to patterns, repetitions and ungrammatical structures found in the text (Toolan 1998:2). However, there are some grammatical theories which allow you to explore meaning through form and functionality, and one of these theories is Halliday's model of Systemic Functional Grammar.

Halliday believes grammar is a 'systemic theory'; a theory of meaning as a choice, and that the use of any given language can be regarded as an act of choosing between a set of distinct alternatives (Halliday 1994: xiv). In this manner, the study of functional grammar contributes to more than just the understanding of language choices; it says something about our human communication skills.

SFG basically aims to show three various perspectives by dividing language expressions into three different functions which all focus on how or why the speaker chooses to express himself the way he does(see further Chapter 2) (Thompson 2004:32-33). The theory of SFG is an already well established theory among linguists and can be applied to a number of fields. The main focus of the theory is predominantly how we use grammar in order to create meaning through different ways of expressing our



experiences. In other words; functional grammar explanations are there to help us sort out and systemize the knowledge we already have about language (Thompson 2004: ix).

If we were to apply this theory to the study of particular individual texts, an SFG analysis would not necessarily be of any aid to the general theory of linguistics, but it could contribute to the general theory of the use of language in literature. However, analyzing an individual text allows us to explore some of the features in terms of what the author wanted to focus on and his/her ability to render the story. Treating a text as a single discourse would in these terms enable us to trace subjectivity or any marks left by the author, or make the analysis stronger in terms of providing more systematic evidence (Stubbs 2004:1). By looking at meaning through grammar, we would be able to draw conclusions about the author's intention both regarding characters and their involvement, and in these terms, measure their experience.

I feel it is important to emphasize the matter of subjectivity and relevance in any sort of interpretation work. An analysis of process and participant types is in this respect not a search for *the* definite answer, but more like a linguistic research into the world of literary interpretation.

## **1.2 Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness***

Joseph Conrad was born Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski in the Ukraine in December 1857. Both of his parents were from Poland and the political convictions of his father resulted in the family being forced into exile in Russia. Josef's mother died there when he was seven in 1865, and when his father died soon after returning to Poland in 1869, Conrad's uncle became his guardian.

After living with his uncle and maternal grandmother for a period of time, Conrad went to sea in 1874 and after almost twenty years as a sailor he settled down in England where he met his future wife Jessie George in 1894. The novel *Almeyer's Folly* was his first publication in 1895, and he had published quite a few novels and short stories including *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897) and *The Secret Agent* (1901) before *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1899.

*Heart of Darkness* is a story which initially takes place on a river boat in the Thames. Here we are introduced to an unknown first-person narrator who is situated on the boat with a group of people. The frame narrator introduces a new narrator, Charlie Marlow, and the reader is once again in a short period of time introduced to a different story. Marlow's story is about one of his other journeys by boat up the Congo River. His journey as an employee in a trading company makes him see how greedy and brutal the treatment of the natives is, and how this exploitation is the main key to success in their way of doing business. Marlow learns about Mr. Kurtz at a company station and is told stories of this man's infamous success as an agent.

Marlow then begins a journey up the river in order to recover Mr. Kurtz, and after a two month long journey he reaches the place where Kurtz lives only to find him dying of illness. The place appears to be Mr. Kurtz's dark kingdom, a place where he is the self-proclaimed 'king'. Marlow tries to get Kurtz to leave with him, but Kurtz is too sick and dies with the words: 'The horror! The horror!', on his lips (HOD 2002:178).

*Heart of Darkness* remains one of the most popular novels taught at universities worldwide and there are numerous contemporary interpretations on *Heart of Darkness* and its importance in modern-day society. One of the reasons for its success can be

connected to some of the issues in the novel concerning the vulnerability and cruel nature of man. *Heart of Darkness* presents us with brutal stories of how colonialism affected Africa with regard to slavery and violence and some of Conrad's main issues regarding right and wrong are still interesting and controversial issues in the twenty-first century.

### **1.3 Structure of the analysis**

In order to explore some of the grammatical options in *Heart of Darkness* in terms of style and its relation to the narrative, I will connect some of my findings to central elements and expressions in narrative theory. The analysis will consist of two chapters which basically are separated into a linguistic (Chapter 3) and literary (Chapter 4) part.

Since the passages are initially analyzed as independent pieces in the analysis in Chapter 3, each part will be separated into one segment which deals with the results and discussion from the SFG analysis of that particular passage, and one dealing with the correspondences between some of the linguistic results and potential literary features connected to these results.

I will further compare and contrast the results of the transitivity options from passages A, B, C and D in percentage terms in 3.6, in order to see if the results have an affect on the reading of the selected passages or the novel as a whole. I will also collect my results and compare them with a normal distribution of process types in a text, further exemplified with Matthiessen's article 'The System of Transitivity: An exploratory study of text-based profiles(1999)', and present a frequency analysis of the combined results from all the four passages in 3.7.

Chapter 4 will consist of a discussion concerning some of the linguistic features from Chapter 3 where my aim is to develop the discussion, but from a literary perspective in connection to narrative theory. The main focus in Chapter 4 will therefore be the linguistic results from Chapter 3 in connection to already established interpretations of what I believe to be the main themes in *Heart of Darkness* in terms of race (4.2), communication (4.3), darkness (4.4) and the relationship between Marlow and Conrad (4.5).

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of my investigation where I aim to gather up my main points and concerns regarding the linguistic analysis from Chapter 3 and the literary analysis from Chapter 4. I also wish to answer some of my research questions from Chapter 1 regarding the use of linguistic features in the literary interpretation of *Heart of Darkness*.

## Chapter 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 What is Systemic Functional Grammar?

The main theory behind the study of process and participant types is the view of the clause as having a representative function. Halliday divides discourse into three distinct strands of meaning which he refers to as *metafunctions*. These three are (1) *the interpersonal*, (2) *the textual* and (3) *the experiential* metafunction (Thompson 2004: 30-32). Even though all three metafunctions are useful and necessary components of a discursal act, they each represent different kinds of meaning. However, every metafunction is concerned with a particular aspect of the communication process.

*The interpersonal metafunction* deals with interaction itself and how we exchange meanings as a part of communicating (Thompson 2004:45). The focus on attitudinal meaning reflects the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the interpersonal metafunction deals with the use of lexico-grammatical systems, such as mood and modality, in order to investigate how we create meaning.

*The textual metafunction* is more concerned with wordings and how they are constructed. Here, the focus lies on the way in which information is presented, the choice of Theme, and the marking of given and new information. The choice of Theme affects the meaning in terms of deciding what the text is about as well as specifying the framework of a sentence (Thompson 2004:164). By labelling the parts of a clause into *Theme* (the first constituent of a clause) and *Rheme* (the rest of the clause), the textual metafunction deals with the combination of given and new information and how this approach contributes to what Thompson (2004:165) refers to as ‘textual organization’.

Another aspect of the textual metafunction is *cohesion* and *coherence*. Whereas cohesion is a textual phenomenon, the speaker is able to express both experiential and interpersonal coherence through these linguistic devices. This basically means that the mind of the reader/writer is connected to the language he/she uses (Thompson 2004:180).

The third and final metafunction is *the experiential metafunction*. Here, we look at a clause as a way of representing experience through what Halliday refers to as ‘the transitivity system’ (Halliday 1994:106). Through the experiential metafunction you see the clause as a configuration of a process with one or more participants and optionally circumstances. Since the transitivity system is the main focus of my study, I will elaborate this more in the next section.

### **2.1.1 The Experiential Metafunction**

As compared to both the interpersonal and textual metafunction, the experiential metafunction deals with the referential content of a discourse. In other words: The experiential metafunction looks into how we describe our experience and reality through discourse in order to explain what is going on (Martin and Rose 2003:66).

When we are talking about a *process* we are thinking about the entire process as a combination of what is going on, whereas participants are mainly people or things involved in the process. We have:

- 1) The process itself
- 2) Participants in the process
- 3) Circumstances associated with the process

As in: They [participant] hastily [circumstance] broke [process] the window [participant].

According to Toolan every verb describes a process, which might be similar to the action described by another verb. For instance, *riding a bike* and *walking along a path* both describe different types of physical action, whereas *being an undergraduate* describes a different sort of process in terms of being in a state. Toolan further argues that it is possible to categorize the different process types into ‘doings’, ‘sayings’, ‘thinkings’ and ‘characterizings’ (1998:75-76).

By separating processes into different process types, you are able to look at the entire process in terms of what is being done, how and to whom. More formal labels for these process types are: Material processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioural processes, verbal processes and existential processes, and each process type is associated with a specific set of participants (Thompson 2004:86).

### **2.1.2 Material processes**

One of the processes describing outer experience is the material process. It deals with the exact action taking place, and the most central participants involved are usually referred to as *actor* or *goal*, depending on whether the participant is doing something (actor) or something is being done to the participant (goal). Both the actor and goal can be a person as well as an abstract entity and even though a material process requires an actor (it may not always be explicitly mentioned), it does not require goal. In passive material clauses, however, the goal tends to be the subject (Thompson 2004:92):

He [goal] was murdered [material process].

Edward [actor] was sawing [material process] wood [goal].

He [goal] was murdered [material process].

In some clauses there may be another participant, the *range*, which is really not a participant at all, but which adds specification to the process in question called.

Whereas the goal may be said to be impacted by the process, the range elaborates or enhances the process in a manner such as this (Martin, Mathiessen, Painter 1997:118):

They [actor] played [material process] (on) the piano [range].

They [actor] polished [material process] the piano [goal].

### **2.1.3 Mental processes**

A mental process deals with the degree of inner experience in terms of perception, reaction and cognition. Whereas material processes refer to what we can call action sequences (ran, jumped, attacked), mental processes deal with the different processes of consciousness (thought, perceived) (Toolan 1998:81).

In a mental process, the participant is usually human and is called senser, while the target of the process is called phenomenon. It is common to separate the different mental processes into emotion, cognition, perception and desideration according to what is being done (Thompson 2004:92):



She [senser] could hear [process: mental, perception] his voice [phenomenon].

You [senser] may want [mental process: desideration] a drink [phenomenon].

I [senser] like [mental process: emotion] that movie [phenomenon].

She [senser] never knew [mental process: cognition] why [phenomenon].

#### **2.1.4 Relational processes**

The processes used to describe and classify an entity are called relational processes. They deal with the relationship created between two separate entities, by either denoting some quality in terms of being attributive, or identify an entity as something else, being identifying (Toolan 1998:82). The verbs often used are verbs such as ‘to be’, or verbs close to it, such as ‘seem’, ‘have’, ‘sound’ and ‘appear’.

This distinction between processes also determines the role of the participant. If a process is attributive, the descriptions will either be carrier or attribute as in:

Stein [carrier] is [relational process: attributive] beautiful [attribute].

If the process is identifying, it is also reversible, and the participant roles would be:

Mary [identified] is [relational process: identifying] the best candidate for the job [identifier].

There is also a third and final relational process; possessive. The possessive relationship denotes that of ownership, in terms of being a kind of attribute as in (Thompson 2004:121):

She [carrier: possessor] 's got [relational process: attribute] long, dark hair [attribute: possessed].

### **2.1.5 Behavioural processes**

We also have borderline cases in between what we think of as mental and material processes; physiological processes. These processes describe typical involuntary human behaviour and are called behavioural processes.

According to Toolan (1998:83), these actions are usually done by a reflex or instinctively, such as breathing, staring, laughing and crying. The participant is the behavior and there is no goal in these process types, only range (Thompson 2004:104):

He [behavior] stared [process: behavioural] in amazement [circumstance].

She [behavior] waved [behavioural process] her hands [range] helplessly [circumstance].

### **2.1.6 Verbal processes**

The way we express experience through language in order to communicate is called a verbal process. The participant involved is typically human, but can also be an object with a statement such as a note, a message, etc. The participant roles are divided between

*sayer*, *receiver* and *target*, and the *sayer* is the main participant which is involved in any verbal process. The *receiver* is to whom the verbal process is addressed, whereas the *target* is the one the verbal process is directed at.

What is said can be referred to as *verbiage* or *matter*, depending on whether the message is ‘summed up’ in the form of a nominal group (*verbiage*) or prepositional phrase (*matter*). The *sayer* is mostly a human participant, but can also be whatever it is that conveys a message, or not explicitly mentioned (Thompson 2004:100-103):

He [*sayer*] repeated [*verbal process*] the warning [*verbiage*].

I [*receiver*] was reproached [*verbal process*] for not noticing anything [*circumstance: matter*].

She [*sayer*] keeps rubbishing [*verbal process*] me [*target*] to the other people at the office [*receiver*].

### **2.1.7 Existential processes**

Existential processes are clauses which focus on existence. The existential process consists of the process itself, and what it is that exists, referred to as the *existent*.

Even though most of the existential processes appear with the existential ‘there’ and the notional subject as the only participant, it is not always easy to draw the line between a material or relational process and an existential process (Thompson 2004:104-105):

Maybe there's [existential process] some other darker pattern [existent].

Maybe some other dark pattern [actor] exists [material process].

### **2.1.8 Circumstance**

According to Thompson (2004:88), circumstances are typically represented in terms of adverbial groups or prepositional phrases, also known as circumstantial adjuncts. He further states they have a sort of 'background' function in regards to time, place and manner, but also with a number of other meanings such as means, quality, reason, purpose, accompaniment, product, matter, angle, condition and concession.

According to Halliday, a circumstantial element has a 'parasitic' function on another process. Instead of being alone, it exists as an expansion on something else (Halliday 2004:151). Circumstances can occur with all process types and they can have the same significance wherever they occur (Thompson 2004:104):

She [behave] waved [behavioural process] her hands [range] helplessly [circumstance].

## 2.2 Previous Research

### 2.2.1 Introduction

At every point the speaker is selecting among a range of possibilities that differ in meaning; and if we attempt to separate meaning from choice we are turning a valuable distinction (between linguistic function) into an arbitrary dichotomy (between 'meaningful' and 'meaningless' choices). All options are embedded in the language system: the system *is* a network of options, deriving from all the various functions of language. (Halliday 1971: 338)

In this passage Halliday comments on the relationship between meaning and choice, emphasizing the importance of looking at language as a sort of interplay between the two. In other words; if the choices we make derive from the meaning we wish to create, one should be able to investigate the meaning behind the language choices as a narrative technique on its own.

Halliday's model of SFG suits a number of different purposes, but mainly within the field of linguistics. As to the research of its usefulness in literature, it has been explored by some, including Halliday himself, but the research material we have on this field still remains somewhat limited. By doing a project on SFG and its use in literature, I am hoping to supplement previous work done by researchers on the study of functional grammar in literature, such as Halliday (1971), Kennedy (1992) and Toolan (1998).

### **2.2.2 M.A.K Halliday and ‘Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding’s *The Inheritors* (1971)’**

In the article ‘Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding’s *The Inheritors*’, Halliday draws attention to the criteria of relevance while looking at linguistic regularity as a means of analyzing literature. Where does one draw the line between what is interesting in the language in the sense of being stylistically relevant or not (1971:330)?

In Halliday’s article he explores Golding’s text in order to see if a functional analysis may contribute to the general theory of the use of language in literature. He believes that if language really is programmed to serve a ‘variety of needs’, and you have a particular way of looking at experience, it should have a literary and stylistic relevance which should be detectable in a linguistic inquiry. In *The Inheritors*, Golding is providing the reader with a particular way of experience through the eyes of the Neanderthal man, which according to Halliday, provides a remarkable illustration of how grammar can convey levels of meaning in literature (Halliday 1971:332).

By selecting three passages, namely A, B and C, he makes a linguistic inquiry into the linguistic differences between the three. He finds that there is a significant contrast in the way in which the main actors in the novel, the Neanderthal people, are portrayed in terms of their understanding of the processes they are involved in, as well as their own participation in them. Halliday thus compares his findings from passages A to C, making a brief summary of the language he has found typical for each passage.

The language used to describe the Neanderthals show that there is no ‘cause and effect’. In other words; the processes are seldom connected to an external cause. In those

cases where they are, the agent is non human and where it is a human being, it is seldom one of the people. There tends to be only one participant in the process types, and other entities involved are merely circumstantial elements. People do not cause events with objects, and the action made is only involving them or parts of their body as in *Lok peered at the stick* (1971:353-354).

The language used to portray those who take over from the Neanderthals, ‘the Inheritors’ is quite different than the one used to describe the Neanderthals and the distinction between the two is particularly noticeable in terms of what sort of process types they are involved in. Whereas the Inheritors are involved in causative directed actions and have the ability to influence their surroundings, the Neanderthals are not involved in hardly any processes due to an external cause (1971:351-354).

Halliday concludes his project with a discussion on the writer’s use of language and how it reflects the variety of functions a language can have. By choosing a particular way of expressing the characters thoughts and ability to act, Golding represents their experience through ‘the syntactic recourses of transitivity (Halliday 1971:360)’.

### **2.2.3 Chris Kennedy and ‘Systemic Grammar and its Use in Literary Analysis (1992)’**

Chris Kennedy draws further attention to the work of Halliday and his use of SFG in literary analysis with his research on the usefulness of SFG in a literary analysis of Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*. Kennedy explores the transitivity system in order to analyze a passage concerned with the murder of Mr. Verloc by his wife (1992:86).

Kennedy finds that there are thirteen verbs where Mr. Verloc is the actor and that eight of these are mental processes of perception. His results further show that all except one of the processes are intransitive in terms of being used without a goal and that none has Mr. Verloc as initiator of the action. He is, in fact, the passive bystander to his own death and even though he understands what is about to happen, he does not have the time to act before he is killed (1992:87).

When Kennedy examines Mrs Verloc's role in the story, her actions are mainly without goals and there seems to be no connection between her physical actions and her mental state. The transitive verbs of action seem to be connected to parts of her body and it does not seem as though she is aware of her actions. Either the actor is replaced by an instrument, as in: 'the carving knife had vanished' or her body parts is taking over the role as actor (1992:88). According to Kennedy, the distance between Mrs Verloc and the murder she commits thus creates a situation entirely based on choices made by the author by 'selecting certain options available within certain functions' (1992:90).

#### **2.2.4 Michael Toolan and *Language in Literature* (1998)**

In his book, Toolan explores the world of stylistics or literary linguistics in order to provide the reader with a detailed introduction as to how one can analyze literature in linguistic terms.

*Language in Literature* (1998) deals with a range of different topics such as repetition, speech and thought patterns in literature, modality and the system of SFG. His main goal is to systemize and explain how language can create particular effects in fictional texts, especially through the study of stylistics.



### 2.2.5 Chinua Achebe and ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1977)’

In the famous essay ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*’, Chinua Achebe criticizes Conrad for his representation of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*. He uses the following excerpt to illustrate how it ‘single-mindedly’ represents Africa and ‘the fascination it holds over the Western mind’ (Achebe 1977:254):

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there -- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly and the men were.... No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman. (HOD 2002 pp.138-139)

Chinua Achebe statements concerning the writings of Joseph Conrad are one of the most famous critiques there are on *Heart of Darkness*. His view on the manner in which Conrad chooses to express himself in order to ‘trick’ the reader into not paying attention to what he is, in fact, writing, is a controversial claim and one of the main reasons why this analysis is potentially very interesting(1977:253).

The novel’s ambiguous contents, as well as the controversies often connected to race related issues, are some of the reasons why some of Achebe’s points have not yet been addressed. I will comment on some of these issues through out the thesis, especially in connection with the analysis of passage C, one of the passages referred to by Achebe. I will also return to Achebe and his essay about *Heart of Darkness* in Chapter 4 when I return to my discussion from Chapter 3 and look at the effect of a linguistic approach to literature.

### **2.3 Narrative Theory: Narratology**

Narratology is the study of narrative and is used as a tool for analyzing narrative literature and to obtain a greater understanding of narrative texts. Examining how a narrative text is narrated and structured enables us to see and understand how meaning, including literary meaning, is generated and shaped.

A narrative is defined by Jakob Lothe as ‘a chain of events which is situated in time and space.’ Narratives can be said to be everywhere in terms of newspaper articles or conversations with narrative sequences. However, one of the things narratives have in common is that they often report what people have experienced with the use of words. In this manner, stories take a narrative form and however brief they are, they can be said to be narratives. The reason why narrative texts are both fascinating and important is because we recognize the way storytelling helps us to see our own patterns of experience. A narrative sequence often consists of a report of something we have experienced, and we choose to talk about our experiences by telling a story (Lothe 2005:3).

According to Lothe the ability to render stories based on our own experience is connected to the way in which we have a tendency to ‘view life as a story- a temporally limited line of development from beginning to end (2005:3)’. By examining the narrator in terms of his/her reliability, narrative time and space and narrative perspective, we can understand better how the experience is portrayed.

The process of analyzing grammar in a text in order to gain ‘new’ information about a work of fiction is not a typical approach in most literary studies. However, this does not mean that it is seen as a useless approach, as some literary researchers are making room for elements of this kind in their study of stylistics. There are many things

which can be said to combine the study of narrative fiction with the study of the transitivity system in SFG, such as their common focus on language as a meaningful asset. However, the focus both fields have on experience, how people choose to explain them and what sort of effect they want to create is what I see as an invitation to further studies of the interdisciplinary field of Narratology and SFG. Narrative theory is, in this respect, used as a tool of analyzing fiction the same way as SFG can be. Neither of the theories can be used as a means to single-handedly create an objective reading of fiction, but is to be used as an aid to the understanding of a text.

## 2.4 Method

This section deals with the research method I have used in the thesis and how I intend to conduct my investigation. As previously mentioned in the introduction, the transitivity of a clause is a configuration of three types of elements: a) the process, b) the participants, and c) circumstantial functions. By looking at *Heart of Darkness* in these terms I wish to accomplish two things:

- a) Do a linguistic investigation of the transitivity functions in *Heart of Darkness* and see if a process and participant analysis of selected passages will be useful in the literary analysis of the novel in terms of providing new or more detailed information concerning the characters and their involvement in the text.
- b) Explore significant narrative features of *Heart of Darkness* in order to see if some of the situations can be seen as a direct result of Conrad's distinct language choices and how this may effect an interpretation.

My analysis of *Heart of Darkness* is aided by the work of Michael Halliday and his 'Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry Into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors* (1971)'. My methods are also greatly inspired by his work in this field. I have selected four different segments from the novel, which I will refer to as A, B, C and D. I have chosen these passages because they represent different parts of the novel in terms of narrative aspects and interesting thematic issues. The passages are recaptured here in the same manner as they are in the revised edition of *Heart of Darkness* from 2002.

Passage A (2002:104) is taken from the introduction of the novel. Here the reader meets an unknown first-person narrator who introduces the story in terms of presenting the particular setting and the people surrounding him. In the passage, the narrative perspective shifts, and a new narrator by the name of Charlie Marlow, is suddenly introduced.

Passage B (2002:118) is excerpted from Marlow's story of his experiences while traveling up a river in Congo on a river boat. This passage is loaded with images produced by the narrator Marlow, and it is a very important and highly descriptive passage.

Passage C (2002:138-139) has already been selected and commented on by Chinua Achebe 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' (1977). In this passage Marlow is the main narrator again, but this time in a different role than before. He is no longer an individual, but he functions as part of a group. The reader is presented with the feelings of the entire group through Marlow's words and one gets the feeling of a strong group mentality narrated by Marlow.

Passage D (2002:168) is a longer description of one of the few women in *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow meets Kurtz's lover who is a mysterious African woman. Many feminist writers consider this passage as one of the most important passages in terms of representing women in the novel. The descriptions are powerful and once again Marlow is the observer.

By closely examining each passage I will analyze the sentences individually in order to determine the process and participant types. Since I am not going to admit the entire analysis in my thesis, I will include the segments I have chosen and comment on parts of my analysis in the text in order to show how I have obtained some of the results. The entire analysis is included in the appendix and consists of several levels in order to analyze all the clauses. This means I will include embedded clauses as well as single clauses, analyzing them as both an element in the structure they are embedded, as well as having their own transitivity structure (Thompson: 2004:113).

In order to limit parts of my investigation, I have chosen to disregard certain forms and aspects in my analysis, but include occurrences I feel are valuable to my research in terms of meaning. I have chosen to:

- a) Analyze finite verbs only, and disregard the non-finite forms.
- b) Disregard embedded configurations of actor/process, such as *nominalizations*.
- c) Ignore the issue of modal clauses and analyzed them as though they were expressed congruently.
- d) Leave out circumstantial elements in the analysis.

As for the circumstantial elements, the classification of circumstances is so complex in itself that including them would extend beyond the time and space available

(see Halliday: 1994:149-159). I have, however, marked circumstances in the appendix and analysis, though without further comments or enhancements.

I have chosen to analyze the 154 clauses manually. I will provide each passage with a table in order to sum up the selections of the different process types. I will further contrast the quantitative results from all four passages before comparing my results collectively with what I will refer to as a 'standard' quantitative profile of transitivity options in a text by using the article 'The system of transitivity: An exploratory study of text-based profiles' by Christian M.I.M Matthiessen (1999).

My primary sources consist of both an electronic version of *Heart of Darkness* as well as two printed editions edited by Cedric Watts in 2002 and Robert Kimbrough in 1988. The passages have been selected from the revised and corrected version by Watts (2002). My secondary sources will mainly consist of the theoretical work on SFG by Michael Halliday and his colleagues on the field of SFG. I have used M.A.K Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1994) and Geoff Thompson's *Introducing Functional Grammar* (2004) as a model on the expressions and examples I have chosen to use. I have also used material dealing with the use of SFG in literary analysis, such as Halliday's analysis of *The Inheritors* by William Golding (1971), and Chris Kennedy's article on *The Secret Agent* by Joseph Conrad (1992).

Since my thesis also will consist of literary material, I will be using secondary material dealing with the use of language in literature and literary theory, such as Lothe (2005) and Toolan (1998). I have also used Achebe (1977) frequently in order to compare and contrast some of his main points regarding *Heart of Darkness* with mine.

## Chapter 3: ANALYSIS OF *HEART OF DARKNESS*

### 3.1 Introduction

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, *Heart of Darkness* is one of the most widely taught and researched novels in the world (Lothe 2002:95). The reason for its popularity may be linked to some of the social, racial and historical issues Conrad is concerned with in the novel, combined with a particular literary style. It may also be related to, or partly explained by, the controversial issues connected to *Heart of Darkness*.

According to Chinua Achebe, the story itself combined with the language used by the author is merely an attempt to attack the African people and the African culture (Achebe 1977:252). He further claims that Conrad himself is deeply involved in distributing a more than barely noticeable racist view on Africans through the words of his main narrator Marlow, which unfortunately is an issue that remains somewhat un-debated among literary critics:

But if Conrad's intention is to draw a cordon sanitaire between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator his care seems to me totally wasted because he neglects to hint however subtly or tentatively at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters. (1977:256).

The narrative features in *Heart of Darkness* seem to be of common interest to many critics. The passages I have selected are therefore all representative of the interplay between some of the narrative qualities and thematic issues in *Heart of Darkness*. To what extent is it possible to connect Conrad's grammatical choices to some of the situations we find in *Heart of Darkness*?

### 3.2 Passage A

*Heart of Darkness* is a complex narrative and there are two narrators presenting the story to the reader. First, there is the frame narrator, an unknown man who presents the story to the reader onboard a river boat called *Nellie* which is situated on the river Thames in London. In the introduction of *Heart of Darkness* the frame narrator is surrounded by five other characters including the man who is to become the story's second and main narrator; Charlie Marlow.

In passage A the frame narrator does not seem too preoccupied with Marlow at first until he suddenly is able to introduce him as though he knows him very well:

“And this also”, said Marlow suddenly, “has been one of the dark places of the earth.”

He was the only man of us who still “followed the sea.”

The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer, too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them--the ship; and so is their country--the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same.

In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. 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.

His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence. No one took the trouble to grunt even; and presently he said, very slow-

“I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago--the other day. (HOD 2002:105)



### 3.2.1 An SFG analysis of passage A

As shown in table 3.1, the sentences of passage A contain 27 processes which mainly have a descriptive function divided between relational processes [17] with an attributive function [16] and relational processes with an identifying function [1].

There are 5 clauses of action divided between material processes [3] and verbal processes [2]. There is one instance of existential processes [1], whereas the mental processes [4] are all that of cognition.

The analysis of the entire passage is found in the appendix. The numbers of the examples below refer to the consecutive numbering of sentences in passage A (see appendix).

**Table 3.1**

material	3	11 %
behavioural	0	0 %
mental	4	15 %
verbal	2	7.5 %
relational	17	63 %
existential	1	3.5 %
TOTAL	27	100 %

Some of the processes in passage A are relational grammatically speaking, but since they are about minds they borrow meaning from the mental domain. If we take a closer look at these, we see that they are used for describing mental phenomena:

(3) He[carrier] was[relational] a seaman[attribute], but he[carrier] was[relational] a wanderer[attribute], too, while most Seamen[actor] lead[material], if one[sayer] may so express[verbal] it[verbiage], a sedentary life[range].

(4) Their minds [carrier] are [relational] of the stay-at-home order [attribute], and their home [carrier] is [relational] always with them [attribute]--the ship; and so is their country--the sea.

Both (3) and (4) have processes which may be interpreted either way. The process in Their *minds are of the stay-home order* may be interpreted as a mental process, giving us the impression that the sailors are thinking of their home. However, it is clearly similar to the descriptive sentence (4) where the seamen are thoroughly described, and the processes in (3) and (4) are therefore relational processes.

Usually the verbs in passage A are finite and appear in both past [9] and present tense [5]. However, a shift occurs in the middle of the passage and the narrative situation is thus slightly altered when the narrator shifts from past tense (8) to present tense (9). This shift signifies a change in the current narrator's role, and sentence (9) is therefore a blend of the narrating situation of the frame narrator and the new narrative situation soon to be created by Marlow:

(8)The yarns of seamen *have* a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which *lies* within the shell of a cracked nut.

(9)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.

The participant subjects in passage A are mainly human participants [7] referring to Marlow as a carrier in a relational attributive clause in terms of *he*, *him* and *Marlow*. The remaining subjects refer to more general things often connected to the sea or being a seaman such as *Seamen*, *the yarns of seamen*, *one*, *their home* and *one ship*. The extensive use of relational processes shows how the frame narrator is presenting his own opinion on Marlow and sailors in general, thus assigning them with specific qualities by the use of relational processes (Halliday 1994:119). In addition to this, the use of *to be*

and *to have* as relational processes gives the impression of definite certainty from the narrator's point of view, and the descriptions of Marlow therefore seem as a non-debating issue. If we sum up some of the linguistic features of the language in passage A, we find:

- 1) There is only one participant in most of the clauses, typically the subject. The participant is mainly:
  - (a) Actor in a material process, sener in mental process or carrier in attributive relational process. There are no instances of an affected participant.
  - (b) A person or some sort of reference to the sea or being a seaman.
  
- 2) The process is typically:
  - (c) A descriptive and typically relational process. Some of the processes are seemingly mental processes in terms of describing something cognitive, but turn out to be relational processes nonetheless.
  - (d) Finite verbs in simple past and present tense. However, there is a shift between the two which signals a change in the narrative situation.

### **3.2.2 Correspondences between the linguistic and literary analysis of passage A**

In passage A the frame narrator is telling the story as first-person narrator. According to Jahn, a first-person narrator refers to as a type of homodiegetic narrative, a narrative which is told by a narrator who is participating in the story as an acting character on the level of action' (2005:§1.10). However, the level of action may vary and there are different ways in which a narrator may participate in a story. The frame narrator, for instance, is only active in the sense of linking the stories together. In contrast to Marlow, the unknown frame narrator only provides the setting and introduces the new narrator before 'leaving' his initial story-telling role to become one of Marlow's listeners.

The frame narrator shows his narrative skills by entering the minds of the people around him. He is setting the scene, describing not only his surroundings and the 'others', but also the character who is to become the next narrator, Marlow:

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. (HOD 2002:105).

Paradoxically, Marlow's role in passage A is important and non-interfering at the same time. He is the carrier of different attributes assigned to him by the frame narrator, thus being the centre of attention, but he is never the initiator of the action. He is given a proper romantic introduction in terms of being the only man in the group *who still followed the sea, a seaman and a wanderer*, but his role is limited to that of being impacted by the process and targeted by the action.

If we return to the relational processes with a distinctly mental meaning in passage A, we see that the frame narrator is the one making the connections between the group of people on the boat and their thoughts. The use of attributive relational processes signifies that the narrator sees himself fit to make these conclusions by entering the minds of the people surrounding him while describing them at the same time. He characterizes the group of men, particularly the seamen and their life, giving a thorough and detailed description of what sort of man the reader can expect. By providing the reader with a detailed account of Marlow's attributes, he subtly manipulates our attitude to Marlow as readers. There seems to be no apparent reason to question the frame narrator's reliability and we trust his judgement about Marlow.

When the frame narrator describes the other men on the ship, he sometimes speaks on their behalf as though they were a group with only one voice. The other men on the ship seem to have no immediate importance, except that of fulfilling the role of passive listeners. In fact, they seem somewhat unanimous in thought until a voice interrupts them:

His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence. No one took the trouble to grunt even; and presently he said, very slow—  
 “I was thinking of very old times when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago--the other day.” (HOD 2002:105)

This is not the first time Marlow decides to interrupt the silence on the boat, but the frame narrator has remained the main narrator until this point. With the final interruption made by Marlow, the frame narrator becomes one of the listeners and the roles are changing. Marlow has now gone from having a carrier role to a senser role and the shift in the narrative situation signifies both a linguistic and literary change. The previous subjects referring to Marlow in third person are now substituted with the first person personal pronoun ‘I’ in the last sentence. Marlow is about to tell his story.

### **3.3 Passage B**

In passage B the transformation from listener to narrator is completed, and the role of the frame narrator from passage A has been substituted with Marlow’s narrative.

Marlow now functions as both narrator and character in the story, giving detailed descriptions to the listeners and the reader of his previous experience on the river Congo.

In the following passage, we are introduced to Marlow's observations of the Africans and we are presented with harsh imagery of his encounter with them, as well as the Africans' encounter with him:

“Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. “They were dying slowly--it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, -- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air--and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young--almost a boy--but you know with them it's hard to tell. I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I had in my pocket. The fingers closed slowly on it and held--there was no other movement and no other glance. He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck--Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge--an ornament--a charm--a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it? It looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.

“Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up. One, with his chin propped on his knees, stared at nothing, in an intolerable and appalling manner: his brother phantom rested its forehead, as if overcome with a great weariness; and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or a pestilence. While I stood horror-struck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone. (HOD 2002:118)

### 3.3.1 An SFG analysis of passage B

As shown in table 3.2, the sentences of passage B [23] contain 51 process types, mainly distributed between that of material [17], behavioural [12] and relational processes [12]. The mental processes [9] are divided between that of emotion [2], perception [5] and cognition [2]. The number of relational processes [12] in passage B, are mostly attributive [8], whereas the remaining 4 are divided between identifying [3] and possessive [1]. There are no verbal processes in passage B and only one instance of existential process [1].

The entire analysis is to be found in the appendix. The numbers of the examples below refer to the consecutive numbering of sentences in passage B (see appendix).

**Table 3.2**

material	17	33.5 %
behavioural	12	23.5 %
mental	9	17.5 %
verbal	0	0 %
relational	12	23.5 %
existential	1	2 %
TOTAL	51	100 %

There are more active processes in passage B compared to what we saw in passage A.

The material processes are typically represented by a finite verb in the simple past tense, denoting physical action driven forward, such as *fed*, *sickened* and *reclined*. The distinction between material and behavioural processes, however, is difficult to determine in some of the cases. However, while the material processes deal with action as ‘doings’, the behavioural processes are in between that of material and mental processes and portrays the active version of the human consciousness. In other words, there is a

difference in the way Marlow describes type of physical actions in passage B, and he seems to be more preoccupied with the reasons behind the actions. This result in a number of verbs which represent the mental and material domain through behavioural processes in (1): *crouched, lay, sat, leaning, clinging, half coming out, half effaced*.

The mental processes mostly consist of processes dealing with perception in terms of the act of seeing such as *began to distinguish* (9) *saw, glancing* (10), whereas those dealing with cognition and the human cognitive aspect are mainly *know* (12) and *found nothing else to do* (13). The emotive mental processes *lost in uncongenial surroundings* (7) and *While I stood horror-struck* (22), gives a brief summary of the processes of feeling in passage A, which I will comment on later.

The participant roles are divided between the Africans and their body-parts, and the narrator Marlow. There are 21 instances of African participants in passage A, mostly as actors in material clauses [14] and behavers in behavioural clauses [5]. Some of the participant roles [6] are body parts belonging to the Africans, and they occur in both material and mental processes: (11) *The black bones* reclined (material process), *the eyelids* rose (material process), *the sunken eyes* looked (mental process: perception) and (14) *The fingers* closed (material process).

Marlow appears as the main participant in 6 processes, mainly as senser in mental clauses of perception [3] and cognition [2], and is not participating in any form of material processes as actor or goal. The few instances we have of goal [2] and range [1] in passage B all denote parts of the body, but in different ways. The range functions as a further specification of the behavioural process in (21) with *rested* [behavioural process] *its forehead* [range], whereas the goal in (23) signifies the actor's impact on himself with



*and after a time* [circumstance] *let* [material] *his woolly head* [goal] *fall* [material] *on his breastbone* [circumstance]. The range and goal in passage B have two distinct ways of enhancing the process in question. Whereas the action of resting the man's forehead is an action limited to the process of resting, the goal 'the woolly head' in (23) is also somewhat limited to the process of letting it fall. The head is co-referential with the actor, so it is therefore not impacted in the same way as it would be if it was an external object.

In Halliday's article on *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthals are typically involved in processes where there is no external cause and there is no 'effective relation' between persons and objects (1971:353-354). The lack of goal in passage B signifies how little impact the actors in fact have on their surroundings, and the people described do simply not have the power to affect or alter their instant environment (Martin, Matthiessen, Painter 1997:118). This sort of inability to have an impact on their surroundings is similar to what we see with the Africans in passage B. I will return to this important fact in the literary interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* in Chapter 4.

If we sum up some of the language features in passage B, we find:

There is only one participant in most of the clauses, typically the subject. The participant is mainly:

- (a) Actor in a material process, senser in mental process or behavior in behavioural clauses. Marlow is mainly senser and the Africans function as actors or behaviors.
- (b) A person or part of body.
- (c) Not frequently appearing as range and goal.

2) The process is typically:

- (d) Divided into two process types depending on the participant. Whereas Marlow is represented by no movement and thought instead of action, the Africans are all about movement and no thought.
- (e) Not having a direct impact on the surroundings in terms of goal.
- (f) Finite verbs in simple past and present tense denoting movement and straightforward action.

### **3.3.2 Correspondences between the linguistic and literary analysis of passage B**

Marlow's role in passage B is in many ways a very peculiar one for a main narrator. He witnesses something he has never seen before, but he is clearly not participating in the action. The images of cruel and vicious treatment suddenly forced upon him, however, make it difficult for him to remain in the distanced role of the observer.

Marlow's appearance is limited to being the senser and he is not the initiator of any sort of active processes. Again it would seem that the main character is not responsible for much of the action taking place, by only having roles in processes which are not involved in the action. There is not a single attribute assigned to Marlow in passage B, and the passage differs from passage A and its high frequency of attributive relational processes with Marlow as the carrier. As first-person narrator in passage B, he is now able to assign more qualities to his surroundings than to himself, which is what the frame narrator did in passage A. Thus, the narrative style of passage B is very similar to that of A in terms of having the main narrator of the passage assign attributes to his surroundings.

There are a number of behavioural processes connected to the Africans and it would seem as though these processes all refer to the same type of action; action made by exhausted or passive people. If we look at the behavioural processes once again, the verbs

*leaning, clinging* and *crouching* (1) all refer to physiological processes rather than merely physical action. The narrator is thus able to connect what he sees as physical action with what he believes might be their mental state. Suddenly Marlow's observations are dealing with more than just their physical being, and his narrator role seems more concerned with what appears to be physically and emotional exhaustion from their part:

And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. They were dying slowly--it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, -- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air--and nearly as thin. (HOD 2002:118).

Marlow is observing people on the verge of dying. He is confronted with a situation he needs to distance himself from, but which he fails to do. When he describes people dying in the first lines, he does so through the use of particular descriptions such as *had withdrawn to die* (4). The word 'withdraw' is an ambiguous word, due to its use in the mental domain. In many cases 'a withdrawal' need not be even remotely connected to that of movement. However, in this case it is analyzed as an active process, due to the further explanation in (5). Here, the process of dying is somewhat different in terms of explaining that they were, in fact, dying and doing so slowly.

Considering the fact that Marlow states 'it was very clear' that they were dying slowly, he is observing these people dying *while standing horror-struck* (22). He does not merely observe what goes on inside of their minds, as he would with a mental withdrawal, but also what he sees as physical evidence of the dying taking place. However, even though Marlow witnesses how their life is going to expire through what

seems to be a physical event, it all depends on Marlow's ability to draw this particular conclusion. But should we trust his conclusions?

As he is the only observer, we have to question his reliability as first-person narrator. Marlow is the only one identifying and assigning qualities to his surroundings and he is also the only perceiver in the passage. His ambiguous statements and sudden shifts between being the involved narrator on the one side and extremely detached on the other is apparent:

The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly.  
 "The man seemed young--almost a boy--but you know with them it's hard to tell."  
 (HOD 2002:118)".

A comment such as this makes it difficult to determine Marlow's role and his ability as narrator. The distance in some of his observation combined with the way he describes people, is one of the main issues Achebe reacts to in his critical essay. He feels that Conrad's descriptive passages about people portray Africans as 'just limbs and rolling eyes, which is a fairly accurate description of passage B in terms of having body-parts as the only participants (Achebe 1977:254). In (11) and (14) there are a number of different body-parts in the role of actors, such as *the eyelids, the fingers, two more bundles of acute angles, black shapes, the black bones* and *one of these creatures*. The use of parts of the body to describe people makes the characters seem non-human even though the narrator insists that they are human.

The Africans are portrayed as behavers, clearly assigned human behaviour and feelings put into action, which is more than one can say about Marlow. His lack of

movement and physical involvement is not affecting his surroundings any more than that of the other participants in passage B, which brings me to an important issue; who has the most power in their actions? According to Toolan it is possible to distinguish between 'kinds of do-er' (agent) and kinds of 'done-to' (target) individuals (1998:88). Note that the expression 'target' does not refer to a participant in a verbal process (see 2.1.6). If we find that a human individual is often cast as target and rarely as agent, it is expected that the role of the person is not as powerful as an individual functioning often as agent and rarely as the target. In some of the processes in passage B, the distinction between the man doing the action and the action done by the man is what makes him seem less powerful. This sort of detachment between the participant and process may therefore at first glance support Achebe's view and what he believes to be an attempt to reduce a man to a bundle of body-parts instead of acknowledging him as a man. This interpretation would also strengthen the theory of an emotional detached narrator wanting to underline his own humanity, while sneering at the one of others. However, this may not be what Conrad intended.

According to Kennedy this sort of detachment between actor and action creates an effect which would seem like a deliberate choice created by the author in order to make it seem as though the person acting is not aware of his/her actions (Kennedy: 1992:89). In this case where the separation is made by Marlow and not by the people in question, any such effect would therefore reflect Marlow's separation from his own consciousness. This approach would signify a desire to reveal the narrator's disability to narrate events he struggles with. Marlow's way of dismantling the images of people dying enables him to cope with what he has seen in his narrative. If this was a deliberate choice made by

Conrad, the particular narrative technique would not reflect a detached narrator, but a very involved man, and the narrative we are given is not an attempt to make us look away from the African's humanity, but to stare right at it.

### 3.4 Passage C

Like many other critics, Achebe focuses on the passages describing people in *Heart of Darkness*. He feels the Africans are portrayed in a grotesque way as phantoms without any trace of humanity and language. In order to further prove his point, Achebe refers to almost an entire page of text, emphasizing some of its phrases (1977:253-254).

In this passage criticized by Achebe, and my selected passage C, Marlow and a group of other men are traveling up the Congo River towards Kurtz. The excerpt deals with their experiences as a group as they go up the river, and their encounter with the Africans:

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly as we struggled round a bend there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us -- who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were traveling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign -- and no memories.

"The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there -- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly and the men were .... No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces, but

what thrilled you, was just the thought of their humanity -- like yours -- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough, but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you -- you so remote from the night of first ages -- could comprehend.” (HOD 2002:138-139)

### 3.4.1 An SFG analysis of passage C

As seen in table 3.3, the sentences [21] of passage C contain 50 processes. There are a larger number of relational processes [16], mostly in terms of attributive relational processes [14], and some occurrences of identifying relational processes [2]. The mental processes [13] are divided into cognition [9] and perception [4], and there are no instances of emotion or desideration. There is almost the same amount of material [8] and behavioural processes [7], and the frequencies of verbal [3] and existential processes [3] are the same.

The entire analysis is to be found in the appendix. The numbers of the examples below refer to the consecutive numbering of sentences in passage C (see appendix).

**Table 3.3**

material	8	16 %
behavioural	7	14 %
mental	13	26 %
verbal	3	6 %
relational	16	32 %
existential	3	6 %
TOTAL	50	100 %

The material processes are often represented by a finite single verb in past tense denoting straight forward physical action such as *struggled* (3) *toiled* (4) and *glided* (6).

Some of the verbal actions in this passage are a result of a communication failure between Marlow and his men and the group of Africans they meet. According to Marlow,

it was impossible to know whether or not the Africans were praying, cursing or welcoming them, and it is therefore difficult to decide whether the processes are verbal or behavioural. Since they all refer to the same verbal act, I decided that *cursing us*, *praying us*, *welcoming us* (5) are to be analyzed as verbal processes. I analyzed *shouted* and *sang* (5) as behavioural processes due to the lack of verbiage expressed or implied and their strong link to the behavioural aspect of a process.

The participants are mainly represented by Marlow and his group [17] or the Africans [9]. There are also 12 instances of other non-human participants both abstract and concrete. The participants in passage C are mostly expressed through the personal pronoun *we* [9] and the generic pronoun *you* [6], and occur frequently regardless of process and participant types. The use of the generic pronoun ‘you’ occurs in instances of modal metaphors as in *you know* (12), a phrase which reflects both interpersonal meaning and use (Thompson 2004:232). In passage C it is mainly referring to the narrator himself as in *what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity* (14) and has the effect of involving the reader more than the pronoun *we*.

The Africans are mostly represented by the use of ‘they’ and ‘it’ and they function as sayer, behaviour, actor and carrier. There are also embedded configurations of actor/behavior + process in passage C in terms of what Toolan refers to as ‘re-packaged activities’, also known as *nominalizations*. Some of these configurations are isolated and stable things entailing an activity (Toolan 1998:96-97). The nominalizations in (3) are therefore not interesting as processes, but as a means to describe the Africans.

- (1) But suddenly [circumstance] as we [actor] struggled [material] round a bend [circumstance] there would be [existential] *a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of*



*feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage[existent]*

The effect of (3) is that of portraying people and their actions as though they were passive entities instead of moving individuals. As I will comment on later, (3) has a foreshadowing effect and shows how the Africans and their actions are seen and described by the group of spectators.

There was only one incident where the Africans were goal and four incidents of Marlow and his group being goal [1] or target [3]. This goes to show that even though Marlow's group is represented more in terms of being the subject participant, they also appear as goal or target of a process as seen in (5) : The prehistoric man [sayer] was cursing [verbal] us [target], praying [verbal] to us [target], welcoming [verbal] us [target] – who [senser:] could tell [mental, perception]?

As previously mentioned, according to Toolan, you can analyze participation and intention by looking at how the participants function in a process, whether it is actor or goal, initiator or target. In some transitive material process verbs, the participant filling the subject positions has a tendency of being more active and intending than that of the participant in an intransitive clause, who is assumed to go through the process unintentionally (Toolan 1998:88). If we look back to passages A, B and C there are clearly more instances with one participant being the only nominal element in the clause and therefore the subject, than sentences containing several participants. It would therefore be expected that the characters filling the participant roles are the most active ones, even though they are not necessarily involved in active processes. However, in passage C it is difficult to measure level of participation between the main participants.

Even though Marlow and his men are more actors than they are goal, the only instance of affected participant in the passage belongs to him and his group of men.

If we summarize the language in passage C, we find:

- (1) There is only one participant in most of the clauses, typically the subject. The participant is mainly:
  - (a) A person from the group of observers, functioning as sensors, represented by personal pronouns 'we', 'you' and 'us'.
  - (b) An African native, mainly in the participant role of sayer, behavior, sensor and carrier, represented by the personal pronouns 'they' and 'it'.
  - (c) Range or goal, representing Marlow and his crew of men.
  
- (2) The process is:
  - (d) Mostly non-action based in terms of attributive relational processes and mental processes.
  - (e) Finite verbs in simple past tense.
  - (f) Embedded configurations of participant + process in terms of nominalizations.

### **3.4.2 Correspondences between the linguistic and literary analysis of passage C**

In this passage we are once again introduced to Marlow's narrative. However, in contrast to the previous passages, Marlow is more concerned with himself and his surroundings here than what we have witnessed before.

The participants in passage C were often represented by the personal pronoun 'we', and had the function of identifier, sensor and actor. The use of 'we' represented Marlow and his group of men and their common actions, making the narrative somewhat similar to that of the frame narrator in passage A. However, the only difference is that having a 'we'-narrative contributes to the impression of there being a unanimous voice,

whereas the frame narrator in passage A at least made the distinction between himself and the group.

Passage C also contains a number of generic pronouns such as *one* and *you*. In these cases Marlow judges his own observations by assigning his own feelings to that of the group of listeners from passage A. By asserting the use of these pronouns, his dialogue is based on the possibility that the group of listeners will understand his reactions in Congo. This becomes clear in his general statements *come slowly to one* and *you know* which sound a bit more like distanced observations than personal experience. The use of ‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘one’ make it seem as though the listeners and Marlow and his group of men are one group in terms of sharing a common ideological ground, and he has no apparent problems in including them into his deepest thoughts at the time. This sense of shared ideology suggests an act of separation between the Europeans and the Africans, underlining their different cultural background as a reason why they are not able to communicate through the frequent use of ‘we’ and ‘they’.

In (3) we saw how some of the African participants and processes they were involved in were expressed through the use of nominalizations, which almost created the feeling of ‘ignored’ action. They are moving, but their movement is reduced to the idea of movement once, reducing their role as acting agents in the clause:

But suddenly as we struggled round a bend there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. (HOD 2002:138)

This sentence has a proleptic function onwards from sentence (3) and seems to emphasize their inhumanity. However, Marlow insists on that they are not inhuman in (10) to (12):

‘It was unearthly and the men were .... No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman.’

Segments such as these are very unfortunate in terms of defending Conrad and it is understandable that some people are offended by this ambiguity as to the way the Africans are projected. However, there are not many participant roles actually filled with Africans in passage C and the participant roles generally belong to Marlow and his crew of people, rather than the Africans. This may of course be interpreted as yet another insult. On the other hand, as I will return to in chapter 4, one may question whether it is appropriate to blame a narrator for his lack of insight, or the author for creating such a narrator.

### 3.5 Passage D

The African woman is a mysterious character in *Heart of Darkness*. Compared to the other characters in the novel, her role is entirely different. The descriptions are strong images of a powerful and proud woman, who also turns out to be Kurtz’s mistress:

And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman.

“She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her.

She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.

“She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us.

Her long shadow fell to the water's edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve.

She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose.

A whole minute passed, and then she made a step forward.

There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her.

The young fellow by my side growled. The pilgrims murmured at my back. She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace. A formidable silence hung over the scene.

"She turned away slowly, walked on, following the bank, and passed into the bushes to the left. Once only her eyes gleamed back at us in the dusk of the thickets before she disappeared. (HOD 2002:167-168).

### 3.5.1 An SFG analysis of passage D

As shown in table 3.4, the sentences [20] in passage D contain 33 processes, mainly represented by material processes [18]. The mental processes [5] in passage C are all that of perception and the relational processes [6] are divided into attributive [4] and possessive relational processes [2]. The existential [2] and verbal processes [2] have the lowest frequency, while there are no instances of behavioural processes [0].

The entire analysis is to be found in the appendix. The numbers of the examples below refer to the consecutive numbering of sentences in passage D (see appendix).

**Table 3.4**

material	18	55%
behavioural	0	0 %
mental	5	15 %
verbal	2	6 %
relational	6	18 %
existential	2	6 %
TOTAL	33	100 %

In passage D, more than 50 per cent of the processes are material and the frequency is much higher compared to what we saw in passages A to C. The processes are typically represented by straight forward physical action, represented by a simple past tense finite verb such as *came, fell, had* (8-10), whereas the mental processes are all involved in the act of perceiving and only in terms of seeing. Most of the relational processes, both possessive and attributive, are used to describe the woman's possessions and qualities. She is described as *savage and superb* (6), *wild-eyed and magnificent, a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve* (10).

There are no instances of behavioural processes, which signify an alteration in the descriptions of the African woman as compared to the other Africans in the novel. Some of the actions in passage B and C are behavioural due to their link to the mental domain and to the lack of causation and directedness. In passage D, however, most of the processes are material and they lack the connection between the mind and body. The descriptions are more activated than what we have seen in the other three passages, and the character is described through physical actions alone:

(2) And from right to left along the lighted shore [circumstance] moved [material] a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman [actor].

(3) She [actor] walked [material] with measured steps [circumstance], draped [relational] in striped and fringed cloths [attribute], treading [material] the earth [range] proudly [circumstance], with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments [circumstance].

(4) She [actor] carried [material] her head [range] high [circumstance]; her hair [goal] was done [material] in the shape of a helmet [circumstance]; she [carrier] had [relational: possession] brass

Leggings [attribute] to the knee [circumstance], brass wire gauntlets [attribute] to the elbow [circumstance], a crimson spot [attribute] on her tawny cheek [circumstance], innumerable necklaces of glass beads [attribute] on her neck [circumstance]; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step [attribute].

If we look at the participant roles, the woman seems to be the leading participant and agent in 22 of the 32 processes in passage D. She is mainly the actor in material processes, but also appears as carrier, possessor and senser. In the occasions where she functions as senser [3], she is the perceiver, looking at Marlow and his group.

Marlow, on the other hand, is not the leading participant in any of the processes in passage D. He functions as goal [1] and phenomenon [3] in some of the clauses, being either the item which is perceived or the affected participant. In all of these cases he is part of a group where *us* is goal (8) or phenomenon (11), (16), (20).

If we sum up the language of passage D, we find:

(1) There is only one participant in most of the clauses, typically the subject. The participant is mainly:

- (a) An actor in a material clause, often represented by the African woman.
- (b) A senser in a mental clause, all in terms of perception, as someone who sees, represented by both Marlow and his group and the African woman.
- (c) As goal or phenomenon, mainly in terms of Marlow and his crew, represented by 'us'.

(2) The process is typically:

- (d) A material process denoting straight forward physical action.
- (e) Finite verbs in simple past tense, usually verbs signifying movement.

### **3.5.2 Correspondences between the linguistic and literary analysis of passage D**

Passage D evolves around the mysterious woman and her actions, whereas Marlow and his men only function as participants on two occasions. Marlow himself does not participate individually, but consequently refers to the group of men by his side.

According to Achebe, the mysterious woman is made out in this particular manner for two reasons: 'First, she is in her place and so she can win Conrad's special brand of

approval and second, she fulfils a structural requirement of the story: a savage counterpart to the refined, European woman who will step forth to end the story (Achebe 1977:255)'.

The woman is pictured as a powerful person and the descriptions of the African woman differ enormously from Marlow's previous descriptions of the African characters. The characterization of the woman is a contrast to the people in previous passages both in terms of the processes she is involved in and her ability to impact her surroundings. She is actor more and behavior less, and when she is the actor, it is not through her body-parts, but through her. Her role as the participant is mainly that of leading actor and senser, while Marlow functions as the impacted goal or phenomenon.

According to Carole Stone and Fawzia Afzal-Khan in 'Gender, Race and Narrative Structure: A Reappraisal of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2000)', the woman symbolizes female power in *Heart of Darkness*. Even though she does not speak and has no name, there is something powerful about her. The woman walks with 'measured steps', treading the earth 'proudly' while carrying her head 'high'. Carole and Afzal-Khan further points out that ' "the silent gaze" of the "savage" woman is more articulate and powerful than Marlow's words', and the descriptions of this woman are by no means powerless, especially compared to the role of Marlow (2000:5).

This interpretation of the woman in *Heart of Darkness* would contradict Kennedy who emphasizes the connection between the speaker and the leading actor. He claims that it is expected that the main actor should be the same as the speaker and therefore produce more utterances (1992:94-95). The role of speaker belongs to the narrator Marlow who is telling the story to a group of men on the river Thames, and the only verbal remarks in



the passage are uttered by his crew of men. However, the remarks *growled* (14) and *murmured* (15) are not exactly complete verbal utterances, and does not define the men as main actors in any way.

### 3.6 A Comparative approach to passages A B C and D

In order to be able to compare the four passages to each other, I have gathered the process and participant analysis from all of the four passages in the table below. The frequency is measured in percentage terms so that they are easily comparable to each other.

Since the passages are all different in both style and function, I have assigned them each with a separate profile which I will refer to as *Language A, B, C and D*.

**Table 3.5**

	Passage A	Passage B	Passage C	Passage D
material	11 %	33.5 %	16 %	55 %
behavioural	0 %	23.5 %	14 %	0 %
mental	15 %	17.5 %	26 %	15 %
verbal	7.5 %	0 %	6 %	6 %
relational	63 %	23.5 %	32 %	18%
existential	3.5 %	2 %	6 %	6 %

There is an extensive use of relational processes [63%] in language A compared to the others. There are not a lot of dynamic processes in terms of material [11%] or verbal processes [7.5%], but there is a relatively high frequency of mental processes [15%].

Language A is more about assigning attributes and describing situations than it is about action. Through the large number of relational processes, the frame narrator is describing Marlow and ‘his type’, before the narrating situation shifts. Thus, the frame narrator has the function of being the assigner of attributes to Marlow, ensuring that he

gives him a proper introduction; (1) *He was the only man of us who still followed the sea,* (2) *The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class,* (3) *He was a seaman but he was a wanderer too.*

There is a higher frequency of material [33.5%] and behavioural processes [23.5%] than that of relational processes [23.5%] in language B. The distinction between the two character-groups is determined by what sort of process types they are involved in. Whereas the participant roles of behavers and actors are mainly represented by the Africans, Marlow mostly appears as a senser in a mental clause. Consequently, the line between participants involved in movement and those that are not is drawn between Marlow and the Africans.

There is a high frequency of non-dynamic processes, such as relational processes [32%] and mental processes [26%] in language C. Marlow is giving a detailed observation of his surroundings and is mainly the senser in terms of perceiving or seeing. The language of passage C is mostly non-active in terms of a high frequency of processes used to describe the 'internal' world such as mental and relational processes. There are few behavioural [14] and material processes [16] in language C.

There is a high frequency of material processes [55%] in passage D and the language is more preoccupied with causative action than what we have seen in passages A to C. The high frequency of material processes is mainly represented through straight forward physical action and the participants are typically represented by the African woman. The mental processes [15%] are all that of perception, and the participant roles are divided between Marlow and the woman. The relational processes [18%] are mostly attributive and mainly assign qualities to the woman through Marlow.

The four passages I analyzed were all very different from each other. Whereas the language in passages A and C appear as less action based and more descriptive, the language in passages B and D is more preoccupied with different types of action processes, such as behavioural and material processes. The frequencies of process types in passages A, B, C and D are therefore very different, reflecting the characters involvement and ability to act.

Even though it is impossible to determine what sort of process types which is more favorable to be a participant in, there are some roles which would appear more powerful than others. The reading of the four passages in terms of transitivity options is therefore interesting in terms of character involvement in *Heart of Darkness*. The characters are all involved in a type of action which reflects their role in the novel in terms of characterization. An important part of the understanding of the novel as a whole is therefore connected to the understanding of the characters' involvement, which enables us to examine some of the situations in *Heart of Darkness* in a different manner.

I have summarized some of the significant patterns from the analysis regarding character involvement below:

1) Marlow is typically:

- (a) The passive observer, not involved in action clauses.
- (b) In the participant role of carrier (passage A) or as the assigner of attributes (passage C and D) in relational processes.
- (c) In the participant role of senser, mostly that of perception and cognition in mental processes.
- (d) Involved in intransitive verbs of action without goal.

2) The other characters are typically:

- (e) Active participants, not involved in cognitive mental processes.
- (f) In the participant role of actor in material processes (passage B), behavior in behavioural processes (passage B) or carrier in attributive relational processes (passage B and C).
- (g) Involved in intransitive verbs of action without goal.

### 3.7 Frequencies of Transitivity Options in a Text

In 'The system of transitivity An Exploratory Study of Text-Based Profiles', Matthiessen uses a systematic approach in order to measure the frequencies of transitivity options in texts. By looking at different process and circumstance types and their frequencies, he wants to establish whether or not these results can give a sense as to how they are typically instantiated in texts (1999:4).

His text samples are divided into different text domains and are put together by 2072 clauses, which again consist of around 14,500 words (1999:12). His analysis is a manually done full scale transitivity analysis, and he supplies what he refers to as a *probability profile* as shown in table 3.6. Matthiessen firmly points out that a scale as small as this affects the degree of certainty, which is a crucial point to be made in any research done on such a small scale, including mine which solely consists of 154 clauses. However, in order to get a sense of what a 'normal' distribution of process types would be, I have chosen to ignore their lack of size and compare the frequencies, showing Matthiessen's results as compared to mine in table 3.6.

It is important to note that while Matthiessen has done an analysis based on several different text types, mine is based on a single novel. It is therefore expected that there will be a lack of consistency between Matthiessen's results from different genres

from that of mine, which focuses on one particular genre. My selection of passages therefore represents four different situations in terms of action and character involvement, in order to investigate how the transitivity options affect some of the narrative situations. The comparison of the two is therefore also significant in terms of measuring the frequencies of transitivity options in a narrative text such as *Heart of Darkness*, compared to an 'average' text.

**Table 3.6 Matthiessen (1999) and *Heart of Darkness* (2002)**

material	1060	51%	material	46	30%
behavioural	100	5%	behavioural	19	12,5%
mental	190	9%	mental	30	19.5%
verbal	214	10%	verbal	7	4.5%
relational	427	23%	relational	45	29%
existential	36	2%	existential	7	4.5%
TOTAL	2072	100%	TOTAL	154	100%

According to the table above we would expect there to be a large number of material and relational processes instantiated in a text as compared to a lack of existential and behavioural processes. The distribution of mental and verbal processes could also be expected to have a somewhat similar frequency. In the article, Matthiessen further provides a profile and a graph in order to give a state of relative 'weight' of the different process types:

Material>relational>mental, verbal>behavioural>existential (Matthiessen 1999: 15)

As also shown in table 3.6, however, the passages from *Heart of Darkness* contain more behavioural and mental processes. In Matthiessen's survey, behavioural processes

are minor types, representing only 5 per cent of the clauses, whereas in my research they consist of 12.5 per cent. There is also a much lower frequency of material and verbal processes than what could be expected, providing me with a slightly different profile:

Material>relational>mental>behavioural>verbal, existential

That material and relational processes are both highly frequent in *Heart of Darkness* would confirm their role as what Matthiessen refers to as ‘the most common selection in discourse’ (1999:38). The fact that *Heart of Darkness* contains more behavioural processes and fewer verbal processes than what could be expected from a ‘normal’ distribution of process types signifies several features of both text and theme which I will briefly discuss.

First of all, the lack of verbal processes may suggest that there are not many verbal actions in *Heart of Darkness* as compared to a standard discourse, again suggesting a lack of verbal communication in the novel. This is an aspect which could be linked to the narrative, and particularly its focus on verbal discourse.

Second, the high frequency of mental processes [19.5%] in *Heart of Darkness* in table 3.6 above, as compared to Matthiessen’s results [9%], may either suggest that there are more observations in terms of seeing and perceiving, or a higher frequency of actions involved with the mental domain, in *Heart of Darkness*. The role of the observer is one of the most central points to be made in *Heart of Darkness* and there are a lot of actions connected to the act of experiencing something first hand, in terms of being the one seeing what is going on. This may also suggest that a lot of the action goes on inside of the narrator’s mind, and not necessarily from the outside.

Finally, the high frequency of behavioural processes [12.5%] in *Heart of Darkness* compared to that of Matthiessen (1999) [5%] suggests a higher number of physiological actions based on the human consciousness than what we could expect. This could be directly connected to the text's involvement in a person's state of mind and the reasons for his actions rather than just the action itself. This could therefore also indicate a more personal and involved text, thus representing some of the significant features of the genre of narrative.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

By looking at the passages from *Heart of Darkness* through the use of the transitivity system, the focus on the different process and participant types helpfully indicates how Conrad chose to express different levels of experience by narrating events in one way instead of another. By providing us with a text where the narrative perspective is sometimes difficult to determine, the effects of his distinct language choices are even more important in order to enable the reader to fully understand his intentions regarding the roles of participants in a situation.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the main character and narrator Marlow and his role as a participant versus that of other characters. Through Marlow's role as the observer, he represents mostly thought and not action through his frequent participation in mental and relational processes in all four passages. The Africans, however, represent uncontrolled action in terms of participating mainly in behavioural and material processes, and not in processes dealing with thought. As for the separation between the initiator and the target, there appears to be no predominant pattern as to their involvement in intransitive verbs of

action rather than transitive verbs. In other words; there seems to be no clear-cut distinction between Marlow and the Africans in terms of having an immediate effect on their surroundings or actions. They were both described as unable to affect their predominate surroundings. The African woman, however, is described differently and is able to affect Marlow and his group of men.

I believe some of the specific features mentioned above are deliberate choices made by Conrad in order to add important meaning to the already complex narrative style in *Heart of Darkness*. In my opinion, the analysis of the segments in Chapter 3 has shown that there could be a connection between the descriptions of the characters' actions and their role in the narrative, which I will briefly discuss here.

First, some of the qualities assigned to Marlow through some of the relational processes in passage A reflect Conrad's desire to give Marlow a proper characterization. By assigning Marlow with a set of important and trustworthy qualities before he is allowed to begin his story, Conrad tries to make sure that the reader will not forget what kind of a person he is: complex, deep, and thoughtful, and a man who stands out from the crowd. As a direct result of this description the reader is likely to keep those qualities in mind later when Marlow's role in his own narrative becomes a matter of interpretation.

Second, the reader experiences Marlow as he struggles to describe his surroundings in passage B and C. His observations reflect his own confusion and frustration, and he is no longer able to look at a starving man as a human being, but rather as a bundle of different parts, unable to have an impact on what is going on. However, Marlow is able to tie their actions directly to the potential reasons for these actions. We witness an impacted narrator, who witnesses what human beings are doing to other



human beings, and he is no longer able to hide his own feelings for what his 'peers' are doing and potential resentment for himself for being a part of it.

Finally, in passage D Marlow finds himself in confrontation with a person who is not starved or in desperate need and he is able to describe her as a person. The woman he meets in Mr. Kurtz' dark kingdom is an African woman who is basically described through her actions. She seems powerful and mysterious, though she remains completely silent and Marlow is stunned and affected by the woman and her actions.

Agreeing with Kennedy (1992), I believe that through the use of transitivity functions it is possible to both be able to define a character through his/ her actions, as well as obtain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind these actions (1992:96). The comparative approach in 3.6 confirmed that the passages were different in terms of the transitivity options, and that the frequencies revealed a pattern in the way the characters were described in each passage. As for the frequencies of transitivity options in the passages combined compared to a normal distribution in 3.7, the analysis of *Heart of Darkness* revealed a higher frequency of mental and behavioural processes than what we could expect. This signifies a stronger emphasis on actions denoting the mental domain in *Heart of Darkness* than in a regular text.

## Chapter 4: LITERARY COMMENTS

### 4.1 Introduction

‘Every work achieves a unique balance among the types and components of meaning, and embodies the writer’s individual exploration of the functional diversity of language’. (Halliday: 1976:360)

According to Lothe, the complexity of *Heart of Darkness* implies that we read the novel differently and that we base our interpretation on our own critical ability and interests and how much we know about the author and the historical setting (2005:157). However, even though we read a novel differently, we can agree on possible themes connected to the text. Joseph Conrad was highly aware of his complex language style and according to Robert F. Haug; the obscurities in *Heart of Darkness* and his particular writing method were in no manner coincidental. In actual fact, Conrad commented on this issue in a letter to a friend, saying: ‘I don’t start with an abstract notion. I start with definite images and as their rendering is true some little effect is produced (Kimbrough 1988:239)’.

In chapter 3, we have discussed if Conrad’s language choices can be related to characterization through the characters’ level of involvement in *Heart of Darkness*. However, even though a linguistic analysis may enhance our perception of a text, it cannot single-handedly represent the author’s exact intentions as regarding a novel or a text. A linguistic approach to literature is therefore more useful in a literary setting than on its own, and a combination should provide us with a more relevant analysis.

In this chapter I wish to turn my attention to some of the linguistic features discussed in chapter three and connect them to important themes in the novel. By looking

closely at linguistic effects and linking them to the novel as a whole, I wish to show how my results from the transitivity analysis in Chapter 3 can be of use to the literary analysis of *Heart of Darkness*. I also wish to problematize some of the conventional readings of the text.

## 4.2 Race

One of the most widely mentioned themes in regard to *Heart of Darkness* is the matter of race. Critics like Achebe have even argued that the novel ‘celebrates the dehumanization’ and ‘depersonalizes a portion of the human race’, and should in this respect not be considered to be a great work of art (1977:257). As one of the most influential interpretations of *Heart of Darkness*, his indictment is as forceful as it is controversial, and Achebe’s essay is famous for its controversial claims concerning the dehumanization of Africa and Africans through the ‘moral malaise’ of Marlow (Achebe 1977).

Marlow’s role in *Heart of Darkness* is closely connected to the aspect of distance, mostly in terms of *attitudinal distance*. This is an important aspect in narrative theory which focuses on the narrator’s level of insight and how he relates to other characters in the text. To determine a narrator’s values is often connected to the reader’s own interpretation skills, which makes it difficult to clarify the narrator’s role. However, according to Lothe examining a narrator in these terms can help clarify the narrator’s level of participation (Lothe 2005:34-38).

Our perception of Marlow is highly influenced by what we believe to be reflections of his value system and insight in the text. If the reader has the impression of Marlow as an unreliable racist, his statements will seem accordingly. If we look back on

some of my initial comments in Chapter 3 concerning nominalizations, I pointed out that these configurations ‘removed’ the African people’s ability to act in terms of making them motionless and powerless. This segment taken from passage C provides the reader with an idea of the Africans as embodiments of actions, not actors:

But suddenly as we struggled round a bend there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage.(HOD 2002: 138)

Conrad’s use of features such as these is mainly restricted to the characterization of the African people in *Heart of Darkness*. If one were to see these features as proof of Marlow’s lack of knowledge, it would be easy to dismiss him as a reliable narrator in the same manner Achebe does (1977). Having said this, there are a few additional points concerning his interpretation I wish to discuss in retrospect of some of my results from Chapter 3.

First, the type of physical action we witness being performed by the Africans is presented to the reader through the eyes of Marlow. By connecting physical action to what he believes to be their psychological state, Marlow’s descriptions reflect his narrating perspective in terms of portraying the minds and souls of people. These descriptions reveal fragments of Marlow’s ability to connect the narrative to his own emotive state rather than to simply narrate events without participating emotionally. He is confronted with the difficulties of rendering painful memories and he needs to detach himself from what he is experiencing.

Second, this particular distance between actor and action may not be an attempt to question the Africans and their humanity, but to rather question the aspect of cause and

effect. By separating body from mind it would seem that the body is completely detached from any mental state, which would not be an entirely wrong observation from Marlow's point of view. His impression of these men is that they are in a state of total resignation preparing to die and that someone forces them to experience this sort of 'withdrawal'.

Finally, Marlow's attempt to separate body from action can also be an attempt to distance himself from what he is seeing. In Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) Mrs. Verloc is portrayed in the same 'powerless manner' by being 'replaced' by parts of her body or an instrument (Kennedy 1999:88-89). The distance between one of the main characters and his/her actions is therefore not an unknown feature in Conrad's style. If Conrad's intention was to achieve the same stylistic effect in *Heart of Darkness* as he did in *The Secret Agent*, it would reflect Marlow in the same manner as Mrs. Verloc and portray a clearly emotional character in desperate need to cope with acts of murder for which he feels partly responsible.

### **4.3 Communication**

If a text represents the literary genre of narrative fiction, it is automatically implied that the text is a 'spoken' text, often realized through the act of story-telling. This sort of *narrative communication* is an exchange of words between the 'addresser' and the 'addressee' (Lothe 2005:11-16).

In *Heart of Darkness* the communication processes are multi-layered in terms of frequent shifts in narrator, the narrative time and place, and the group of listeners. These shifts affect the relationship between narrator and narrate in terms of altering Marlow's role. The complex narrative structures in *Heart of Darkness* thus enable us to connect

some of the characters to their ability to communicate and make it easier for us to focus on the processes involved with communication.

The characters in *Heart of Darkness* mainly speak different languages and the ones who speak the same are not necessarily able to converse. The disadvantage of having an alienated narrator who does not understand or speak the language is one of the reasons why one could accuse Marlow's narrating skills of being somewhat poor. In one of the excerpts from passage C, Marlow's encounter with the African language is described as a powerful and confusing incident:

The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us -- who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.(HOD 2002: 138-139)

However, the disability to communicate does not seem entirely directed at the African language. It is clear that nobody from the group understands the language, which reflects their limited knowledge about the country they are travelling through.

There have been several attempts made to criticize Conrad for ignoring the language barrier by using a narrator who does not speak the language, leaving the Africans unable to communicate. Achebe feels the ways the Africans are depicted in terms of language is one of Conrad's best assaults in *Heart of Darkness* (1977:255).

The fact that there are few verbal processes in the selected passages confirms an overall lack of verbal communication. This could suggest that Conrad had no intentions of including the language issue as a part of his discussion of humanity. The mysterious African woman, for instance, appears as a silent, yet very powerful being, and her identity does not seem compromised in any way due to her obvious lack of voice. As an

addition to this, those who are able to communicate are not necessarily depicted as more human than those 'without' a language. It is almost as though the communication between the characters is not based on the use of language at all, but on silent communication through body language or unspoken gestures.

The complexity of the narrative situation in *Heart of Darkness* extends beyond what one might expect from an 'ordinary' narrative situation and involves several layers of communication acts. Whereas the narrative aspect in *Heart of Darkness* is based on the fictive communication between the narrator Marlow and his listeners, the real communication is the interaction between Conrad and the reader, which I will come back to when I discuss the connection between Marlow and Conrad in 4.5.

#### **4.4 The Heart of Darkness**

The title of the novel has the same function as the frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness* and provides the reader with a solid expectation of what is to come. By introducing the story on a boat at anchor in the Thames estuary, the introduction might make the reader expect a story taking place in this setting. However, with Marlow's 'interruptions', the reader is invited to join the group of listeners on the boat in an unexpected twist which changes both the narrator and the narrative setting.

In *Joseph Conrad*, Lothe (2002) discusses the importance of the introduction, pointing how it provides a text with a sense of direction. The introduction introduces Marlow and allows him to begin his narrative while inviting the listeners to a journey in space, time and darkness (2002:115). The introduction by the naïve and almost strangely neutral frame narrator makes the leap to Marlow's narrative more effective. The

transition occurs in this famous quote from *Heart of Darkness*: ‘And this also,’ said Marlow suddenly, ‘has been one of the dark places of the earth (2002:105).’

Marlow’s initial comment alters the narrative space and provides the listeners with a narrative from the Congo River while the story technically speaking is still being told on the river Thames. The comment is one of the first in the novel to deal with what Lothe refers to as ‘the text’s central metaphor’; darkness, which perhaps surprisingly enough refers to the city of London (Lothe 2005(b):142).

The *spatial distance* between the act of narration, which is London, and the setting of the narrative in Congo, is an important aspect in *Heart of Darkness*. Lothe argues that even though the comment makes a distinction between ‘civilized’ London and ‘primitive’ Africa, there may be another meaning behind this comparison created by Conrad (2005:36). With his comment, Marlow limits the distance between the two places by referring to London as *also* being a dark place. His comparison of the two distinct geographical areas automatically sets the scene for future references between the two places by limiting the historical differences and focusing on their similarities (Lothe 2005:36).

After a while Marlow interrupts again, this time wanting to give the story a more precise timeline: ‘I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago--the other day (HOD 2002:105).’ The effect created by Marlow does not only signify spatial distance, but also temporal. Here he is referring to a specific moment in time, ‘nineteen hundred years ago’ thus making the connection between the story he is about to tell and the time when the Romans conquered England (Lothe 2000:36). The link is interesting in terms of both time and space; not only is



Marlow making a statement about England's dark past, but he is comparing the Roman conquest of England with the Belgian conquest in Congo. By referring to England as 'one of the dark places of the world', he is creating an atmosphere for his listeners in order for them to understand the similarities between the darkness of the past and the present.

The title *Heart of Darkness* suggests 'darkness' as a main theme of the novel. Generally speaking, the term 'darkness' tends to denote more frightening phenomena than the term 'light', and the darkness in *Heart of Darkness* is by no means different. In addition to the frequency of the term itself, there is also an underlying sensation of a dark atmosphere throughout.

The issue of darkness in *Heart of Darkness* is interpreted by many as a symbol of Africa as a 'dark continent', thus being a counterpart to the 'light/white Europe', connecting the heart of darkness to Congo through the image of a savage and hopeless atmosphere in Africa. This is an approach I feel would be an unfair gesture both to our narrator and to Conrad as author. By diminishing Marlow's significance in terms of theme in *Heart of Darkness*, it would also remove the importance of his presence in the narrative. I must therefore agree with Watts who implies that, if anything, Marlow is there in order to link the negative connotations to the term 'dark' with the colour white in terms of the white invaders and their cruelty (Watts 1977:249).

#### **4.5 Marlow and Conrad**

The roles played by Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* are many and ambiguous. Even though he is introduced as a man with distinct attributes and qualities which make him look like a fair and involved man, we also seem to be facing a curiously indifferent narrator.

Marlow's participation in his own narrative as one of the main actors is very limited compared to his numerous acts of observation. This distanced-observer role makes him seem paralyzed on several occasions.

This ambiguity need not be a problem in determining Marlow's role in *Heart of Darkness*, but a complex narrator can interfere with our understanding of the text. If he is considered as unreliable by the reader, his observations and narrative may be subjected to suspicious treatment and even disliking by the reader. This said, I feel the question regarding Marlow's observer role is a very important issue in the critical reading of *Heart of Darkness* and should be addressed thoroughly. I therefore find it appropriate to discuss a few points concerning Marlow's narrative in connection to some of my results from Chapter 3.

First and foremost, Marlow's attitudinal distance in *Heart of Darkness* is very difficult to determine precisely due to its obvious connection to the reader's own subjective interpretation of the narrator. The approach can therefore make the reader become 'the victim of his own interpretation'; either by only connecting stylistic features to his own interpretations and disregarding important functional and stylistic features, or by relying on what Fish (1973) refers to as a 'selective attention to data' and ignoring features which seem to contradict our own interpretation of stylistics (Stubbs 2004:1). However, according to Lothe, the concept of attitudinal distance is a helpful approach to the discussion of the narrator's role and enables us to look at the intention and value system of the text (Lothe 2005:36).

Second, Marlow's ability to describe action as physiological processes instead of straightforward action is another interesting aspect of Marlow's narrative. By assigning

behavioural processes to the people around him, he renders their feelings in connection to the actions they are involved in, thus reflecting his own feelings on the matter. In addition to this, Marlow's own scepticism about the imperialist enterprise in Congo is clearly visible through some of the novel's passages and segments (Lothe 1998:45):

They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. Behind this raw matter one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently, carrying a rifle by its middle. (...) He was speedily reassured, and with a large, white, rascally grin, and a glance at his charge seemed to take me into partnership in his exalted trust. After all, I was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings. (HOD 2002: 117)

In an article about Conrad and his travel literature, Lothe claims the link between Marlow's experiences in Congo and his scepticism to imperialist enterprise is an indirect, but strong linkage to Conrad himself (1998:45). Joseph Conrad's background as a sailor and traveller was probably one of the most central elements which inspired him to write *Heart of Darkness* in 1899. Conrad's trip to Belgian Congo in 1890 made him write 'Up-river Book' (1890) and 'The Congo Diary' (1890). The latter text is the more relevant one in our critical context. In an article about Conrad and travel literature, Lothe claims that the link between Marlow's experience in Congo and his skepticism about the imperialist enterprise suggests an indirect, but strong link to Conrad himself (Lothe 1998:45).

Even though *Heart of Darkness* is clearly a fictional text, there are a number of important similarities between Marlow's experiences in *Heart of Darkness* and Conrad's trip to Congo in 1890. During his trip Conrad too was confronted with a vicious and violent reality. The events he wrote about in the 'Congo Diary' witnessed some of these

experiences: 'Saw another dead body lying by the path in an attitude of meditative repose (Lothe 2002: 38)'.

The *Congo Diary* was more like a personal narrative than *Heart of Darkness* and it revealed a frustrated and confused Conrad traveling through the Congo:

Feel considerably in doubt about the future. Think just now that my life amongst the people (white) around here cannot be very comfortable. Intend to avoid acquaintances as much as possible. (Lothe 2002:37)

According to Lothe, the knowledge Conrad gained about Congo is what gives *Heart of Darkness* its 'rare authenticity' (Lothe 2000:165). However, even though there seems to be little doubt as to the important link between his authorship and some of Conrad's previous experience, where does one draw the line between the author and a fictional being?

It is a difficult task to try and measure an author's involvement in a text. However, there should be an underlying understanding of the author's previous experience in order to analyze a text in terms of social and historical contexts. If a work of fiction renders historical and social facts, one might deem it necessary to judge the text depending on the context, and not in terms of artistic skills. However, it is important to remember that a work of fiction is fictional, and that it represents historical events and processes indirectly. Seen this, the author remains on the sideline, no matter how close the reader might feel his presence.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The fact that Conrad was acutely aware of his own literary style is one of the reasons why I believe that one should not mistake intentional features for being coincidental.

However, as we have seen in previous chapters, there are different ways of interpreting his style and involvement in the text. The combination of linguistic and literary theories has enabled me to look at the text from different perspectives and help shed light on some of the problematic issues concerning hidden meanings and complexity, particularly regarding some of the characters in *Heart of Darkness*.

The problems with analyzing Marlow's role as narrator are closely linked to the issue of subjectivity. Any analysis invites different interpretations, and even linguistic features can be interpreted in different ways, especially when dealing with a complex style of writing. However, the importance of looking at a narrator's reliability in terms of his/her value system is crucial to the understanding of a narrative, particularly when the narrative itself is ambiguous and complex. Issues such as Marlow's involvement in racial issues are linked to, and partly depend on, the reader's ability to determine Marlow's reliability.

The linguistic analysis of Marlow's participation shows an involved narrator but a distanced character. His descriptions of other characters reflect his ability to render their feelings, as well as revealing fragments of his own emotive participation through some of the linguistic features we have identified at in his narrative. His actions, however, are limited to processes of distanced observing. With this balance, Marlow is thus able to emphasize his own humanity by presenting us with a narrative which clearly shows his

own personal limitations as narrator when confronted with the horrible things he witnessed. He is unable to fully explain the atrocities he had to witness.

Marlow makes sure to reveal the darkness behind his narrative already in the beginning by emphasizing the link between his story from the Congo and old dark times in English history. The dark atmosphere is thus presented to the reader early on as a hint of what darkness lies beneath Marlow's experiences. Marlow's narrative is in this manner closely linked to Conrad's background and experiences in the Congo. Conrad's trip in 1890 prompted him to write *Heart of Darkness* and there are several similarities between Conrad's experience and the fictive narrative *Heart of Darkness*. However, the difference between a personal narrative and a fictional narrative is significant, and the personal link between Conrad and Marlow does not extend beyond the authenticity Conrad supplied to the text. The fictional link between author and narrator, however, is a more rewarding link to examine.

## Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

The main goal of this thesis has been to show how an investigation of grammatical options in a text can function as a rewarding analytical tool in a literary analysis. By exploring *Heart of Darkness* through the transitivity functions, I wanted to examine the characters' participation in different process types and see how their actions affected the characterization and the narrative. Moreover, I wanted to connect these results to Conrad and the various themes in *Heart of Darkness*, including racism, Western imperialism and the relationship between Conrad and Marlow.

The different characterizations in *Heart of Darkness* are a part of a vexed issue regarding race and racism. Even though there are obvious problems connected to Marlow's definition of Africans, their involvement suggest that they are implicated in significant processes which reflect their roles as characters in *Heart of Darkness*. My investigation of the African characters in *Heart of Darkness* confirmed that they are mainly involved in intransitive clauses, either as participants in behavioural or material processes without any goal. Their actions are therefore limited and they are not assigned any power of altering or impacting their surroundings. Additionally, they rarely occur as participants in mental and verbal processes, and when they are assigned the roles as speakers, the verbiage is only implied, but never expressed.

The investigation concerning Marlow's role in *Heart of Darkness* established that his participation can be explored in two ways, depending on whether we emphasize his role as actor or observer. Whereas his observations as a narrator is 'satisfactory' in terms of portraying his frequent involvement in mental processes, Marlow's participation as a leading character is limited compared to what one might expect from him. My

investigation of Marlow confirmed a sort of 'limited' involvement very similar to the characterization of the Africans. However, Marlow's limitations take different forms in terms of mainly being involved in internal action, which is the exact opposite than what we saw with the Africans and their involvement. Looking back at some of Marlow's roles as a main character in terms of the transitivity system, we can conclude that he is mostly the senser in mental processes, and he is rarely the participant of processes which denote action, such as material, behavioural or verbal processes. His frequent participation in processes without goal signifies his inability to make an impact on his predominant surroundings, something which creates yet another similar effect in the characterizations of Marlow and the Africans.

Marlow does not pretend to be more involved in his narrative than he actually is. His lack of action combined with his apparent concern for others suggests an involved narrator who uses his narrative to confront himself with his own disability to participate and describe some of the atrocities he witnessed in Congo. However, the mental image he provides to the reader reflects his dilemma in terms of failing to distance himself completely from the emotions linked to his narrative. The result of his failure is, as we have seen throughout this thesis, a narrative structure which reflects the novel's form. Thus, I partly agree with Carole and Afzal-Khan that the elaborate structure of the novel 'does not pretend to offer us a perfectly clear, uncluttered, unbiased, perfectly natural view of the facts of the past' (2000:3).

If the aspects concerning the characters' actions discussed here illustrate that the characterizations in *Heart of Darkness* are linked to Marlow's interpretation of their role in the narrative, it seems to me that these descriptions cannot be extracted from the



interpretation of Marlow's role in the novel. Since the Africans are frequently portrayed as participants in processes which denote human behaviour, Marlow's analysis of the situation is not meant as a means of questioning their humanity, but rather to question the role they are forced to play. Moreover, his statements emphasize his idea of their humanity and contribute to a debate concerning what he sees as their obvious resignation of life.

Even though it is impossible to ascertain whether or not these results would have an affect on an analysis of the entire text, some of the patterns in the selected passages would at least suggest a connection between the description of the characters and Conrad's intentions with the novel. If one elaborates on this connection, the results contradict some of Achebe's main points about Conrad's apparent racism. Stressing my respect for Achebe's strong and crucial essay, I emphasize the difficulties of arguing against some of his opinions. However, I believe that by attacking *Heart of Darkness* in this manner Achebe disregards other important aspects of the novel, including specific situations where Marlow's language plays an important role. By measuring Marlow's experience through grammar, my conclusions concerning Conrad's intentions contradict Achebe. Even though some of Marlow's comments are provocative and difficult to acknowledge in a modern day interpretation, I do not see the different characterizations in *Heart of Darkness* as an attack on African culture or society, at least not in the manner Achebe is suggesting. On the contrary, I believe the only serious attack made in the novel is reserved for European imperialism during the nineteenth century, and especially its accompanying violence.

I do not question the reasons why Achebe feels obliged to launch a counter attack on someone he feels has wounded his cultural and historical heritage. However, my discussion has suggested that some of his main points are inaccurate and that Achebe's acknowledgment of Conrad as an insightful and talented author should also extend beyond some of his eloquent observations and be directly applied to his interpretation.

Both Halliday (1971) and Stubbs (2004) claim that the study of linguistic features should not be considered as a key in a literary analysis, but rather as a highly useful method in order to shed light on textual features which have remained unnoticed up to this point, enabling us to discover significant differences in a comparative sense (Stubbs 2004:1). According to critics such as Fish, the search for linguistically prominent features is closely connected to our own critical ability, and there is no apparent way of linking empirical evidence to specific stylistic features. Either we already know what to describe and how to do it, or we select features which we consider as important (Stubbs 2004:1).

Since there is no immediate and simple reason why Conrad chose a distinct set of words, as compared to something else, my investigation of the interplay between syntactic and semantic relevance has contributed to further understanding of the author's intention behind his choice of words. The interdisciplinary study of the purpose behind the word choices in *Heart of Darkness* has in this respect been an interesting and rewarding approach to the interpretation of the novel. The investigation of linguistic features has enabled me to connect already established and important stylistic features to a more systematic literary analysis, as well as discovering parts of 'unknown' territory. The results of the combined analysis therefore enable me to interpret the novel through

Conrad's choices and how he wanted to describe his characters by limiting or expanding their ability to participate in the action. It also emphasizes the differences and similarities in the characterizations which reflect the roles in the narrative. Even though it is impossible to make generalizations based on a linguistic inquiry of a single text, I hope to have shown that it is possible to comment on the usefulness of the search for more systematic evidence in a literary analysis. Having said this, the interdisciplinary approach I chose to *Heart of Darkness* is essentially a contribution to further research in both fields rather than an objective linguistic inquiry.

The use of SFG in literary analysis is a relatively unexplored field which could benefit from more research, both in linguistic and literary studies. However, analyzing transitivity functions in literary texts is often considered as a limited approach to saying something about selected passages or extracts, and not whole novels. Moreover, I suspect that Conrad's intricate choices and intentions would be noticeable throughout the entire novel. Whether these results would be present in the analysis of the entire novel is difficult to say, but I think it would be an interesting and critically rewarding task to explore the novel in these terms.

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## APPENDIX

### Passage A (p. 104)

(1)He [carrier] was [relational] the only man of us who still followed the sea [attribute].

(2)The worst that could be said of him [identified] was [relational] that he did not represent his class [identifier].

(3)He[carrier] was[relational] a seaman[attribute], but he[carrier] was[relational] a wanderer[attribute], too, while most Seamen[actor] lead[material], if one[sayer] may so express[verbal] it[verbiage], a sedentary life[range].

(4)Their minds [carrier] are of [relational] the stay-at-home order [attribute], and their home [carrier] is [relational] always with them--the ship [attribute]; and so is [relational] their country--the sea [attribute].

(5)One ship [carrier] is [relational] very much like another [attribute], and the sea [carrier] is [relational] always the same [attribute].

(6)In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces[circumstance], the changing immensity of life[actor], glide[material] past[range], veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance[circumstance]; for there is[existential] nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself[existent], which is[relational] the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny[attribute].

(7)For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore [circumstance] suffices to unfold [mental, perception] for him [goal] the secret of a whole continent [phenomenon] and generally [circumstance] he [senser] finds the secret [phenomenon] not worth knowing [mental, cognition].

(8)The yarns of seamen [carrier] have [relational] a direct simplicity [attribute], the whole meaning of which [carrier] lies [relational] within the shell of a cracked nut [attribute].

(9)But Marlow [carrier] was [relational] not typical [attribute] (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted) [circumstance], and to him [goal] the meaning of an episode [carrier] was [relational] not inside like a kernel but outside enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze [attribute], in the likeness of one of these misty halos

that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine  
[circumstance].

(10)His remark [carrier] did not seem [relational] at all surprising [attribute].

(11)It [carrier] was [relational] just like Marlow [attribute].

(12)It [phenomenon] was accepted [mental, cognition] in silence [circumstance].

(13) No one [senser] took the trouble [mental, cognition] to grunt even; and presently he  
[sayer] said [verbal], very slow [circumstance]—[verbiage]

(14) I[senser] was thinking [mental, cognition] of very old times [phenomenon], when the  
Romans [actor] first came [material] here, nineteen hundred years ago--the other day  
[circumstance].



### Passage B (p.118)

(1) Black shapes [behave] crouched, lay, sat [behavioural] between the trees [circumstance], leaning [behavioural] against the trunks [circumstance], clinging [behavioural] to the earth, half coming out [behavioural], half effaced [behavioural] within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair [circumstance]

(2) Another mine [actor] on the cliff [circumstance] went off [material], followed [material] by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet [range].

(3) The work [actor] was going on [material] The work!

(4) And this [identified] was [relational] the place [identifier] where some of the helpers [actor] had withdrawn [material] to die [circumstance].

(5) They [behave] were dying [behavioural] slowly [circumstance]—it [identified] was [relational] very clear [identifier].

(6) They [carrier] were [relational] not enemies [attribute], they [carrier] were [relational] not criminals [attribute], they [carrier] were [relational] nothing earthly [attribute] now [circumstance],--nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation [behave], lying [behavioural] confusedly in the greenish gloom [circumstance].

(7) Brought [material] from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts [circumstance], lost [mental, emotion] in uncongenial surroundings, fed [material] on unfamiliar food, they sickened [material], became [relational] inefficient [attribute], and were then allowed to crawl [material] away and rest [circumstance].

(8) These moribund shapes [carrier] were [relational] free as air [attribute]--and nearly as thin.

(9) I [senser] began to distinguish [mental, perception] the gleam of eyes under the trees [phenomenon].

(10) Then, glancing [mental, perception] down, I [senser] saw [mental, perception] a face near my hand [phenomenon].

(11) The black bones [actor] reclined [material] at full length with one shoulder against the tree [circumstance], and slowly the eyelids [actor] rose [material] and the sunken eyes [sensor] looked [mental, perception] up at me [phenomenon] enormous and

vacant[attribute], a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died[behavioural] out slowly[circumstance].

(12) The man[carrier] seemed[relational] young[attribute]--almost a boy--but you[sensor] know[mental, cognitive] with them[identified] it's [relational]hard to tell[identifier] [phenomenon].

(13) I[sensor] found [mental, cognitive] nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I[possessor] had [relational] in my pocket [possession] [phenomenon].

(14) The fingers [actor] closed [material] slowly on it and held [circumstance]--there was [existential] no other movement and no other glance [existent].

(15) He [actor] had tied [material] a bit of white worsted round his neck [circumstance]--Why?

(16)Where [circumstance] did he [actor] get [material] it [goal]?

(17) Was [relational] it [carrier] a badge--an ornament--a charm--a propitiatory act [attribute]

(18)Was there [existential] any idea at all connected with it [existent]?

(19) It [carrier] looked [relational] startling round his black neck [attribute], this bit of white thread from beyond the seas [circumstance].

(20)Near the same tree [circumstance] two more bundles of acute angles [behavior] sat [behavioural] with their legs drawn up.

(21) One, with his chin propped on his knees [sensor], stared [mental, perception] at nothing [phenomenon], in an intolerable and appalling manner [circumstance]: his brother phantom [behavior] rested [behavioural] its forehead [range], as if overcome with a great weariness [circumstance]; and all about others [circumstance] were scattered [material] in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or a pestilence.

(22)While I[sensor] stood horror-struck[mental, emotion], one of these creatures[behavior] rose to his hands and knees[behavioural], and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink.

(23) He [actor] lapped out [material] of his hand [range], then [circumstance] sat up[material] in the sunlight[circumstance], crossing his shins[behavioural] in front of

him, and after a time[circumstance] let his woolly head[actor] fall[material]on his  
breastbone[range].

### Passage C (pp 138-139)

(1) We [identified] were [relational] wanderers on a prehistoric earth [identifier], on an earth [carrier] that wore [relational] the aspect of an unknown planet [attribute].

(2) We [senser] could have fancied [mental, cognition] ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil [phenomenon].

(3) But suddenly [circumstance] as we [actor] struggled [material] round a bend [circumstance] there would be [existential] a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage [existent].

(4) The steamer [actor] toiled along [material] slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy [circumstance].

(5) The prehistoric man [sayer] was cursing [verbal] us [target], praying [verbal] to us [target], welcoming [verbal] us [target] – who [senser:] could tell [mental, perception]?

(6) We [goal] were cut off [material] from the comprehension of our surroundings [circumstance]; we [actor] glided past [material] like phantoms [circumstance], wondering and secretly appalled [attribute], as sane men [carrier] would be [relational] before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse [circumstance].

(7) We [senser] could not understand [mental, cognition] because we [carrier] were [relational] too far [attribute] and could not remember [mental, cognition], because we [actor] were travelling [material] in the night of first ages [circumstance], of those ages [carrier] that are [relational] gone [attribute], leaving [material] hardly a sign -- and no memories [range].

(8) The earth [carrier] seemed [relational] unearthly [attribute].

(9) We [senser] are accustomed to look upon [mental, perception] the shackled form of a conquered monster [phenomenon], but there [circumstance] -- there you [senser] could look [mental, perception] at a thing monstrous and free [phenomenon].'

(10) It [carrier] was [relational] unearthly [attribute] and the men were....

(11) No they [carrier] were [relational] not inhuman [attribute].

(12) Well, you [senser] know [mental, cognition] that [identified] was [relational, identifying] the worst of it [identifier] -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman [phenomenon] [identified].

(13) It [phenomenon] would come [mental, cognition] slowly [circumstance] to one [senser].

(14) They [behaviour] howled [behavioural] and leaped [behavioural] and spun [behavioural] and made horrid faces [behavioural], but what thrilled [mental, cognition] you [carrier] [senser], was [relational] just the thought of their humanity [attribute] [phenomenon] -- like yours -- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar [circumstance].

(15) Ugly. Yes, it [carrier] was [relational] ugly [attribute] enough, but if you [carrier] were [relational] man enough [attribute] you [senser] would admit to yourself [mental, cognition] that there was [existential] in you [circumstance] just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise [phenomenon] [existent], a dim suspicion of there being [existential] a meaning in it [existent] which you -- you so remote from the night of first ages [circumstance] [phenomenon] -- could comprehend [mental, cognition].

(16) Now and then a boat from the shore [actor] gave [material] one [beneficiary] a momentary contact with reality [goal].

(18) You [senser] could see [mental, perception] from afar [circumstance] the white of their eyeballs glistening [phenomenon].

(17) It [goal] was paddled [material] by black fellows [actor].

(19) They [behave] shouted [behavioural], sang [behavioural]; their bodies [behave] streamed [behavioural] with perspiration [circumstance]; they [carrier] had [relational] faces like grotesque masks [attribute] -- these chaps; but they [carrier] had [relational] bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement [attribute] that was [relational] as natural and hue as the surf along their coast [attribute].

(20) They [senser] wanted [mental, cognition] no excuse for being there [phenomenon].

(21) They [carrier] were [relational] a great comfort to look at [attribute].

**Passage D (p. 169)**

- (1) Dark human shapes[phenomenon] could be made out[mental, perception] in the distance[circumstance], flitting[material] indistinctly against the gloomy border of the forest[circumstance], and near the river[circumstance] two bronze figures, leaning on tall spears[actor], stood[material] in the sunlight[range] under fantastic headdresses of spotted skins[circumstance], warlike and still in statuesque repose[circumstance].
- (2) And from right to left along the lighted shore [circumstance] moved [material] a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman [actor].
- (3) She[actor] walked[material] with measured steps[circumstance], draped[material] in striped and fringed cloths[range], treading[material] the earth[range] proudly[circumstance], with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments[circumstance].
- (4) She [actor] carried her head high [material]; her hair [goal] was done [material] in the shape of a helmet [circumstance]; she [carrier] had [relational, possessive] brass leggings[attribute] to the knee[circumstance], brass wire gauntlets[attribute] to the elbow[circumstance], a crimson spot[attribute] on her tawny cheek[circumstance], innumerable necklaces of glass beads[attribute] on her neck[circumstance]; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men[carrier], that hung about her[relational], glittered and trembled at every step[attribute].
- (5) She [carrier] must have had [relational, possessive] the value of several elephant tusks upon her [attribute].
- (6) She [carrier] was [relational] savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent [attribute]; there [existential] was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress [existent].
- (7) And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land [circumstance], the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life[senser] seemed to look [mental, perception] at her[phenomenon], pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.
- (8) She [actor] came [material] abreast of the steamer [circumstance], stood still, and faced [material] us [goal].
- (9) Her long shadow [actor] fell [material] to the water's edge [circumstance].

- (10) Her face [carrier] had [relational] a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve [attribute] .
- (11) She [senser] stood looking [mental, perception] at us [phenomenon] without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose [circumstance].
- (12) A whole minute [material] passed, and then she [actor] made a step [material] forward [circumstance].
- (13) There was [existential] a low jingle [existent], a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she [actor] stopped [material] as if her heart had failed her [circumstance].
- (14) The young fellow by my side [sayer] growled [verbal].
- (15) The pilgrims [sayer] murmured [verbal] at my back [circumstance].
- (16) She [senser] looked [mental, perception] at us all [phenomenon] as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance.
- (17) Suddenly she [actor] opened [material] her bared arms [goal] and threw [material] them [goal] up rigid above her head [circumstance], as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky [circumstance], and at the same time [circumstance] the swift shadows [actor] darted [material] out on the earth [circumstance], swept around on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace.
- (18) A formidable silence [attribute] hung [relational] over the scene [carrier].
- (19) She [actor] turned away [material] slowly [circumstance], walked on [material], following the bank [circumstance], and passed [material] into the bushes to the left [circumstance].
- (20) Once only her eyes [senser] gleamed [mental, perception] back at us [phenomenon] in the dusk of the thickets [circumstance] before she [actor] disappeared [material].





