

Darkness (chapter 1) / Yedda Morrison

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e - editions

Darkness (chapter 1)
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Series Editors: Ash Smith, C.J. Martin, and Julia Drescher



William Notman, "Around the Campfire, Caribou Hunting Series," Montreal, QC, 1866. Courtesy of the McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal, QC.



Yedda Morrison, "Pre-Colonial Forest in Fog (a Biocentric reading of William Notman's 'Around the Campfire, Caribou Hunting Series')." Gelatin silver print digitized and manipulated by the artist. Montreal, QC, 2008.

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DARKNESS

Chapter I

re-animating the pre-colonial wilderness:
a biocentric reading of Joseph Conrad's
Heart of Darkness

yedda morrison
fall 2008

I

wind flood
 river.
 turn tide,
 sea-reach stretch
 interminable waterway.
 sea sky weld
 luminous space
 tide
 red cluster sharply peak
 gleams haze rest
 low shores sea vanishing flatness.
 air dark farther back
 condense mournful gloom, brood-
 ing
 earth.
 river
 luminous estuary,
 brooding gloom.
 sea.

bones.

palms

day
brilliance. water shone
sky, without a speck, benign immen-
sity of unstained light; mist on the
marsh gauzy radiant hung from
wood rises inland, draping low shores
diaphanous folds. gloom
brooding reaches,
approach of sun.
curve imperceptible fall,
sank low, glowing white
dull red without rays without heat,
touch of
gloom brooding
waters,

serenity became brilliant more profound.
river reach unruffle

banks, spread tranquil
dignity waterway leading
earth. stream
vivid flush day
august light

"follow the sea"

lower reaches tidal cur-
rent runs

sea.

sea.

jewels flashing in the night

dark

gold
stream,

land,
 spark fire.
 float ebb river
 earth!

sun set; dusk fell stream, lights
 shore. light-
 mud-flat, shone

Lights
 lights
 upper reaches

sky, brooding sunshine, glare
 stars.

dark places earth."

sea."

sea,

sea

shores,

sea

shore

shell of a cracked nut.

kernel

glow haze,
 misty halos
 illumination moonshine.

day. . . . Light river

blaze on a plain, flash lightning running
 clouds.

flicker—
 earth darkness

sea lead, sky
 smoke,

river

Sand-bank marsh forest

water

wilderness,
fog,

hay—cold,

air, water, bush.

darkness.

Land swamp,

wood inland

wilderness

forest, jungle

palm

lotus-flower—

darkness.

earth,

Flames

river,

green flames, red flames, white flames,

night

river.

flood;

water

ebb

run,

fresh-

river

light

light.

Ocean,

Seas—

earth.

blank

spaces

earth,

lakes

white patch

rivers
blank space

a place of dark-

ness.

river

snake uncoiled,

head in the sea,

body

curving

vast

tail lost in

depths

land.

snake

bird—a silly

bird.

river.

fresh water—

snake

river

hens.

black hens.

forest,

ribs

grass growing
bones.

gape black, rotting,

bush,
hens

[illegible]

blue, green, smears of orange,
purple
yellow.
river snake.
light dim,
black wool

wool

Darkness, black

black wool.

air

cool

rose.

river-

light,

brightly.

sunset.

day

earth.

coast.

coast

air

jungle, dark-green
black, white surf,
blue sea glitter
creeping mist. sun
land glisten drip steam.
greyish-whitish specks
white surf,

wilder-
ness,

surf;

coast

oily sea,
coast,

surf

shore

bone,
muscle,
surf
coast.

coast.

bush.

greasy, slimy swell

immensity earth, sky,
water,

small flame a little white smoke

day)

earth

catacomb;

coast

surf,

Nature

rivers,

stream

banks

rotting into

mud,

waters, thicken

into slime,

mangroves,

mouth

river.

sea-

shore.

day

sun

reach.

rocky cliff

mounds

turned-up earth

shore,

hill,

continuous noise

rapids

ants.

project

into the river.

blind

sunlight drown

rocky

slope.

wallowing

grass,

leading

hill.

boulders,

air.

animal.

trees

shady

dark

stir feebly

smoke

cliff,

face

rock.

cliff

tails.

rib, joints

iron

cliff

shells,

sea.

violently dilate

hill.

stars!

hillside,

blinding sunshine

hill, obliquely,

trees

sandpit,

hole.

narrow ravine,
 scar hillside.
 trees. shade
 circle
 rapids
 headlong, rushing stillness
 grove, breath stir leaf
 move tear-
 ing pace launch earth
 audible.
 trees
 trunks, clinging earth, half
 coming effaced dim light,
 slight
 shudder soil
 earthly black shadows
 ish recesses green-
 coast
 crawl away

air- trees.
 bones
 tree, rose
 white flicker depths
 white
 bit of white black
 tree seas.
 rose
 river
 sunlight,
 shade,

snowy

air.?

fresh

land

apple

stream

depths darkness,
ivory.

narrow strips

sunlight.

big flies buzz fiendishly,

scented

ivory

ivory

flies buzz

rose

steady buzz flies

still treetops grove

stamp

spreading

long grass,

burnt grass,
ravines,thickets,
stonychilly
ablaze with heat;

grass

long grass

gourd

silence

quiet
ing,

tremor

sinking, swell-

path

hot hillside
shade water.

night—

evening,

morning

wrecked in a bush—

shadow

spot.'

river

water surround scrub forest,

smelly mud

rushes.

black

river.

thunderstruck.

river

stones,

river.

blue,

cold,

heavy

shore-

darkness

coast—

white

river

stick

coast.

stick

sunshine

rotten

'ivory'

air,

blew through it

surrounding

clear

speck

earth

grass

burst

blaze

earth

open

avenging

fire consume

smoking

light,

river,

water

collapse
glowing fierce

light
flame leap
embers

fire

shade

wilderness

sound

glow

dark

evening.

hissing

clay

straw

air

ivory

glitter

mica

rose.

—almost black.

Light dawn

moon

rise

water

glow,

steam ascend

moonlight,

riverside,

forest stood up

moonlight,
faint sounds

land
tery, greatness,

silence
mys-
conceal

a little loose dirt,

animal. slope carcass river
mud, mud,
stillness for-
est shiny patches on
the black creek. moon spread every-
thing layer of silver—rank grass,
mud, wall of matted vegetation standing
higher river
gap glittering, glitter-
ing, flow broadly murmur.

face immensity still

a little ivory coming out

planet Mars.

'walking on all-fours.'

rotten

river.

the coast—

pitch dark

heavy night-air

—burst—split!

hillside.

grove

the coast.

coast

afloat.

coast

cold, suddenly
hippopotamus;

an old hippo
on the bank roaming at night

nights

animal

moonlight

delicate

mica

glittering

dangling

mud.

palm

pigeon-

pigeons.

white

ning

in the creek

on a bush to dry.

eve-

on the bank

forest on the other bank of the creek
thundering roll

dark

flow back

recesses

land.

great wall of vegetation, exuberant en-
tangled mass of trunks, branches, leaves, boughs, fes-
toons, motionless moonlight, rioting
invasion a rolling wave of plants,
pile up, crest topple
sweep

splashes

snorts

glitter

great river.

white

tan

white

brown

air

air

wilderness

bowels

land

II

evening

bank.

shore

rain

This work imagines a wood/world prior to, and free from, imperial intervention.

In the case of the photograph, by physically removing the original image's "subject;" the hunters, I attempt to unearth a forest subsumed by the narratives of colonialism. In reading a traditional image or text through this lens, I'm trying to animate or bring into focus that which has been rendered scenic, passive or ornamental. By refusing to exist merely as backdrop on which the human performs, "Pre-Colonial Forest in Fog" asserts a certain subjectivity of its own. The irony is, of course, that the forest in the original image is itself a fabrication, completely constructed by William Notman and his assistants in studio. Rather than undercutting the presumed authenticity of the image, this seeming contradiction points to the recurrent essentializing mythology of wilderness itself as a lost purity. My decision to also remove the First Nation's guide was a complicated one. But hold your hand up to the original image, block out all but this man. What is left is his defeated form, isolated, condensed to stereotype, and surely included to reinforce the authenticity of the white narrative. To my mind he finds greater agency in the private workings of the woods, complicated and active beyond the cameraman's gaze.

Also by Yedda Morrison:

Girl Scout Nation (Displaced Editions, 2008)

My Pocket Park (Dusie Press, 2007)

Crop (Kelsey Street Press, 2003)

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