

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Joseph Conrad
**Heart of
Darkness**

Read by **David Horovitch**

**THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS**

UNABRIDGED



NA418412D

Part One

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | <i>The Nellie</i> , a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor... | 3:32 |
| 2 | And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall... | 2:51 |
| 3 | The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream... | 2:48 |
| 4 | 'I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans...' | 5:14 |
| 5 | He broke off. Flames glided in the river... | 4:50 |
| 6 | 'You understand it was a Continental concern...' | 4:00 |
| 7 | 'I flew around like mad to get ready...' | 5:27 |
| 8 | 'There was yet a visit to the doctor...' | 3:47 |
| 9 | 'One thing more remained to do...' | 2:39 |
| 10 | 'I left in a French steamer...' | 4:46 |
| 11 | 'We gave her her letters...' | 4:32 |
| 12 | 'A slight clinking behind me made me turn...' | 4:42 |
| 13 | 'Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees...' | 5:32 |
| 14 | 'Everything else in the station was in a muddle...' | 4:33 |
| 15 | 'No use telling you much about that...' | 5:09 |
| 16 | 'I did not see the real significance of that wreck...' | 4:53 |
| 17 | 'He began to speak as soon as he saw me...' | 2:07 |

18	'I went to work the next day...'	5:13
19	'They beguiled the time by backbiting and intriguing...'	4:51
20	'He blew the candle out suddenly...'	4:52
21	'I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz...'	5:02
22	'He was becoming confidential now...'	4:23
23	'I slapped him on the back and shouted...'	5:06

Part Two

24	'One evening as I was lying flat...'	4:05
25	'The two below me moved away...'	3:34
26	'They swore aloud together – out of sheer fright...'	4:14
27	'I beg your pardon. I forgot the heartache...'	5:42
28	'The earth seemed unearthly...'	5:19
29	'Some fifty miles below the Inner Station...'	2:59
30	'The simple old sailor, with his talk of chains...'	3:00
31	'Towards the evening of the second day...'	4:29
32	'I went forward, and ordered the chain to be hauled in...'	3:36
33	'For the rest, the only thing to eat...'	3:53

34	'Two pilgrims were quarrelling in hurried whispers...'	3:30
35	'You should have seen the pilgrims...'	2:10
36	'No sooner had we fairly entered it...'	5:16
37	'A fusillade burst out under my feet...'	4:38
38	'We two whites stood over him...'	4:03
39	There was a pause of profound stillness...	4:04
40	'"Mostly fossil," the manager had remarked disparagingly.'	5:41
41	'He began with the argument that we whites...'	3:54
42	'Poor fool! If he had only left that shutter...'	5:12
43	'His aspect reminded me of something I had seen...'	3:39
44	'The pipe soothed him...'	2:55

Part Three

45	'I looked at him, lost in astonishment...'	3:55
46	'On the contrary. It appears their intercourse...'	3:59
47	'I had taken up my binoculars while we talked...'	3:55
48	'I am not disclosing any trade secrets...'	4:33
49	'His voice lost itself in the calm of the evening...'	4:10
50	'Some of the pilgrims behind the stretcher...'	2:35

51	'She walked with measured steps...'	3:45
52	'At this moment I heard Kurtz's deep voice...'	3:12
53	'I had turned to the wilderness really...'	4:55
54	'When I woke up shortly after midnight...'	5:07
55	'I came upon him, and, if he had not heard me...'	4:21
56	'There was nothing either above or below him...'	4:27
57	'He kept on looking out past me with fiery, longing eyes...'	2:40
58	'Kurtz discoursed. A voice! A voice! It rang deep...'	3:06
59	'We broke down – as I had expected...'	4:11
60	'All the pilgrims rushed out to see. I remained...'	4:58
61	'No, they did not bury me...'	4:51
62	'Ultimately a journalist anxious to know something...'	3:07
63	'I thought his memory was like the other memories...'	3:22
64	'The dusk was falling. I had to wait...'	4:31
65	'"You knew him best," I repeated. And perhaps she did...'	3:37
66	'"I have been very happy – very fortunate..."'	3:05
67	'"His end," said I, with dull anger stirring in me...'	4:47

Total time: 4:38:46

Joseph Conrad

(1857–1924)

Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski to patriotic Polish parents in Berdichev, in Russian-occupied Polish Ukraine. His father, a literary translator, was also politically radical, and as a result was exiled some 300 miles north of Moscow. The weather at such a latitude took as heavy a toll on the family as did their exile, and Conrad's parents both contracted tuberculosis. Although the family was allowed to move to a less demanding climate, Conrad's mother died in 1865, and his father in 1869. By the age of 11, Conrad was an orphan who had seen his parents killed by incurable disease and also by political repression, a combination of pitiless nature and equally inhuman man that finds an echo throughout all of Conrad's fiction.

The echo is there because these ideas became central to Conrad's vision of the world, a vision which was polished like

a lens by his early experiences in Poland up until the age of 16, and then by his life as a mariner over the two succeeding decades. He became a seaman in part because he was trying to avoid Russian military service (his original plan was to take Austro-Hungarian citizenship), but also because he felt a powerful magnetic desire for the sea, for travel in general and to Africa in particular. Getting on the ocean didn't solve all his problems immediately – in 1878 he was nearly killed in what may have been a duel over a woman, but was more likely (though not certainly) a suicide attempt following the loss of substantial sums in a casino. Either way, he ended up losing his place within the French merchant fleet, and so joined the English ship *Mavis*. Over the next few years English became his third language (he was fluent in French as well as his native Polish), and upon becoming

a Master Mariner he was able to become naturalised – and transformed himself into Joseph Conrad.

He travelled on some of the finest vessels of the age (such as the *Torrens*, a renowned passenger boat that held the record for sailing to Australia) and some of the worst (such as the *Palestine*, which took more than a year to sail from Newcastle to Indonesia before being destroyed by fire), and most types of vessel in-between. He also stayed in some very luxurious places. But Conrad was living the life dangerously as well as fully, being involved in gun-running for Spanish rebels at one point; significantly, he found his world-view becoming more and more clearly defined by what he experienced on his travels. He seemed to see the very worst of mankind's attitudes and behaviour, and these formed the basis for many of his fictions. His trips to Africa, South America, southern Europe and elsewhere gave him immediate contact with exotic, hardly-known places that he would later bring to menacing and knowingly inchoate life. But it was not just a profound sense of place that he gave to his stories and tales – he filled them with

the darkest elements of human nature, too. Deprivation, cruelty, failure of honour, vicious brutality and cynical self-interest marked the humanity that he observed.

This was most evident in the voyages that were the inspiration for *Heart of Darkness*. In 1890, beginning his first novel (*Almayer's Folly*), he began the long process of divorcing himself from the sea and becoming a writer. In the same year he was given the chance to be a mate on a steamer operating in the Belgian Congo. Conrad had longed, for years, to go to Africa, drawn by the particular mystery it seemed to exert on the European Victorian imagination. But what he saw there was the most brutal, systematic, corrupt and violent suppression – rapine on a national scale for the benefit of the Belgian king's pockets. Torture, kidnapping, murder, mutilation and more were all used to ensure a workforce of slaves to gather the rubber crop. When Conrad came to write *Heart of Darkness*, some eight years later (it was first published in 1898–99 in serial form in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*), he had matured significantly as a writer; as a result he transformed

this horrific truth into something that was somehow even darker – a metaphor for human civilisation, for the human soul, for humanity.

That is at least one way of seeing it. There are many. The story could be a well-crafted piece of not-quite-fact, a powerful indictment of Belgian colonialism, a general work on the nature of Empires, a broader fable about power and belief, or an even broader symbolic warning about the power of darkness in its many forms to overwhelm the light; perhaps the story is not looking outwards at all, but inwards, towards the individual's essential self. The reason for this multiplicity of potential is that the language Conrad uses is full of implication, uncertainty and suggestion. He creates rolling tides of words that imply much more than they directly state, generating complex and convincing atmospheres rather than specific meanings. In his writing his concern was not specifically for the action itself, but its effect on the protagonists and especially the readers: he wanted to illuminate truths. With *Heart of Darkness*, he went further, creating something like

a 20th-century myth that continues to enthrall and inspire people (most notably in recent times as the Urtext for the film *Apocalypse Now*).

Conrad took from his internal life as well as his external one, of course, but this was no happier a source. He could be emotionally unstable and suffered from depression; he was ill for much of his life (some of it a result of his time in the Congo); and he had an essential Polish sense of the dramatic and romantic, allied to a profound nihilism. And the fact that English was not his first language added a further dimension to his writing. He could bring his European sensibility to bear on the subjects he wrote about, and at the same time use different rhythms, even a slightly unusual vocabulary. The result was the unique cadences and rich allusiveness of his greatest works.

His marriage and two children did not bring him much joy. Many of his considerable circle of literary friends found his marriage to Jessie George inexplicable – she was 15 years his junior, a typist from Peckham, and had nothing in common with Conrad (she might have

countered that Conrad's literary circle were themselves a pretty inexplicable bunch: Ford Madox Ford once washed his greasy Panama hat in her sink then dried it in the oven above her Sunday roast). But then, Conrad found working under adverse circumstances more productive; joy seems not to have been his destiny.

Notes by Roy McMillan



David Horovitch has had a long and distinguished career in theatre, television and radio. His theatre appearances include *Collaboration* and *Taking Sides* at The Chichester Festival Theatre and The Duchess, as well as *Life Is a Dream* at The Donmar. On television, he is best known for his appearance as Inspector Slack in five *Miss Marple* stories with Joan Hickson. His film credits include *Young Victoria*. His radio credits include *The Barchester Chronicles*. For Naxos AudioBooks, he has read *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Good Soldier Švejk* and *The Leopard*.

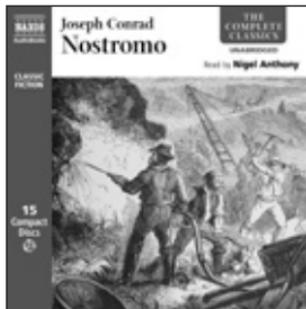
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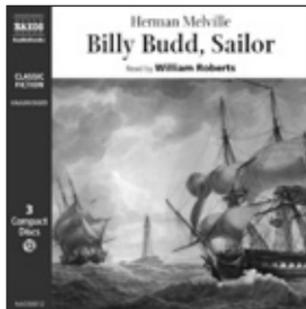
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Roy McMillan

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Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness

Read by **David Horovitch**

'...he seemed to stare...with that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, "The horror! The horror!"'

On a becalmed yawl in the Thames estuary, Marlow tells a tale of Africa. His job there is to find the enigmatic Kurtz, but his journey farther and farther upriver reveals the brutality of the white Imperialists who run the country.

Established as one of the great English novels, and a story of mythic power, *Heart of Darkness* is rich in meaning – allusive, enthralling and haunting.

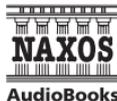
'And this also,' said Marlow suddenly, 'has been one of the dark places of the earth.'



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4:38:46