Like Kurtz, Marlow is a voice, to be listened to rather than talked with. His lack of reciprocity with his audience replicates the solipsism he attempts to break through in his story but cannot because of the absence of dialogue which he tells about and repeats in his manner of telling. The breaks in his narration call attention to the one-sidedness of his monologue even as they raise the possibility of changing the one-way passage of meaning from teller to listener by dramatizing the social structure which might convert it into a reciprocal interaction. * * *

The final irony of *Heart of Darkness*, then, is that Marlow may be as opaque to his audience, including the reader, as the Africans are to him because an absence of reciprocity prevents dialogue in both instances. The canonization of *Heart of Darkness* threatens to make this irony deadly by converting the text from a potential interlocutor into an unquestioned cultural icon or (perhaps the same thing) a set of clichés which are too well known to give rise to thought. Just as Oscar Wilde said of *The Old Curiosity Shop* that no one can read about Little Nell's death without laughing, so perhaps no one can any longer make pronouncements about "the horror" or "the darkness" without prompting groans or sly smiles. The value of Achebe's charges is that they break the aura of the text and reestablish reciprocity between it and its interpreters by putting them on equal terms. Venerating *Heart of Darkness* would only confirm Conrad's doubts about the possibility of dialogical understanding and would thus preserve the text under conditions which would distress him. If, however, we recognize how unsettlingly ambiguous this text is about the ideals of reciprocity and mutual understanding which it negatively projects, we can engage in the sort of dialogue with it which Marlow never achieves with Africans or anyone else.

ANTHONY FOTHERGILL

Cannibalising Traditions: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*†

Conrad's contribution to late Victorian representations of the African "Other" was characteristically complex. He was a writer of his time, but I am not evincing his work simply as an exemplary compendium of the common stereotypes of Victorian Empire. True,

† From Anthony Fothergill, "Cannibalising Traditions: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*," in *Under Postcolonial Eyes: Joseph Conrad After Empire*, ed. Gail Fincham and Myrtle Hooper (Rondebosch U of Cape Town P, 1996), pp. 93–94, 98–107. Reprinted with the permission of Juta Academic Publishers. Notes are the author's.

he won early recognition and was published by W. E. Henley in the jingoistic pages of the *New Review*. Henley saw him as one of his regatta, a comrade-in-arms for the literature of imperialist gusto and masculine heroics. But dismissing comparisons with Kipling, Rider Haggard, and R. L. Stevenson, Conrad saw himself using romance genre forms very much for his own ends. He was a writer living culturally at the margins. A foreign sailor coming late to writing (in his third language), a Pole whose nationalism was borne under the yoke of (Russian) imperialism, not in the name of it, Conrad stood both inside and outside Victorian culture. His marginality lent him the capacity to see the culturally familiar with an estranged eye. Thus he did not simply absorb and unproblematically reiterate the ideological predispositions of his time. He represented their forms of representation to "make us see" their hidden terms, to quote his Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*.

Heart of Darkness provides us with a representation which demonstrates both the culmination of a profoundly entrenched European literary/political way of seeing the non-European Other *and* a radical critique of it. In that respect, the novel prefigures some of the most significant developments in later twentieth-century analyses of cultural representation. But to recognise the self-critique for what it is, we need first to acknowledge the degree to which Conrad was articulating persistent and widely circulating cultural stereotypes. These crucially influenced Europeans' modes of comprehending their "first" encounter with Africa, for representations of the Other are never original and none are innocent. Conrad shared practices of thought whose roots are buried in much earlier forms of European exploration and colonisation. The power of his writing lies in the contradictions existing between this complicity and his critique of these practices.

* * *

Recent studies have done much to uncover the cultural assumptions underpinning anthropological and literary representations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africa. Philip Curtin's *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (London: Macmillan, 1965), and H. Alan Cairns' *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central Africa 1840–1890* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), have sought to establish not so much the history of European contacts with Africa as a history of the images and frames of reference through which the European perceived "the African". This very term—the use of the monolithic, essentialist abstraction, "the African"—is itself, of course, a symptom of the problematics of representation which this essay seeks to address. And if it is validly objected that "the European" is equally false as a category, since it also asserts an ahistorical homogeneity, then

I would say, "Yes, it is false—but not equally false". Binary terms (European/African, Civilised/Primitive) are never used with impartiality. Only a trick of apparent linguistic symmetry conceals the fact that the opposition itself is generated by the language of one of the two sides of the opposition: that which has more powerful interests at stake in the evocation.

Describing pioneers whose religious or trade interests prescribed their writing, Cairns summarises the mid-Victorian perception of Africa thus:

These pioneers saw little of virtue in African cultures. Their observations, usually biased, frequently contradictory, and often simply wrong, are replete with danger to the uncritical research worker. In almost all the nineteenth-century books on Africa the figure of the white man is writ large on the African landscape. In the middle of the dark continent he assumes novel and grandiose proportions. In moral, spiritual, and technological matters he appears as a giant among Pygmies, dwarfing the Africans among whom his activities are carried out. (xii)

A supplementary but crucial argument in the present content is offered by Curtin, who says that even by the 1850s an imagery of Africa reproduced in travel and missionary writing was well-publicised and firmly established in the European mass-circulation media:

It was found in children's books, in Sunday School tracts, in the popular press. Its major affirmations were the "common knowledge" of the educated classes. Thereafter, when new generations of explorers or administrators went to Africa, they went with a prior impression of what they would find. Most often they found it, and in their writings in turn confirmed the older image—or at most altered it only slightly. (3:vi)

In other words, anybody going to Africa for the first time had in a sense already been there; carried, consciously or not, cultural luggage containing well-established assumptions, expectations, and imaginative constructions of "the African", through which to experience its peoples "at first hand".

The later nineteenth century saw a phenomenal increase in popular and scientific literature dealing with Africa. Learned societies like the Anthropological Society of London encouraged the developing study of "primitive" peoples. Stimulus to the enterprise was added by the perceived cultural implications of Darwin's theory of evolution and by the archeological discoveries made in the wake of

colonial expansion in the 1870s and 1880s. All this contributed a growing body of "scientific knowledge" about Africa, which reinforced even as it modified the terms of earlier literary representations. Growing commercial and political contact (predating the Scramble for Africa of the mid-1880s but massively increased by it) kindled in the popular imagination an infectious interest in the area and in the currency and potency of the images of Africa and representations of "primitive" man which such literature propagated. Furthermore, World Exhibitions such as the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace and the Paris World Exhibition, and others run by ethnological societies, were enormously popular and influential, reinforcing a heavily mediated, profoundly stereotypic understanding of foreign "races".

Basic structures of understanding Africa and the African Other, premised on Eurocentric fears, desires, and assumed superiority, then, adapted themselves to new colonial impulses. In particular, the view of Africa as "virgin" land ripe for economic exploitation in the last decades of the century affected the way the continent and its peoples were represented. For the material interests of the colonialists, who required adventure capital investment in profitable enterprises, did not always coincide with the interests preoccupying other earlier Europeans in Africa. These had generated images of an exotic, mysterious, and challenging landscape which needed taming (by the intrepid explorer) and of a primitive people who needed converting from heathen beliefs (by missionaries). But the imperialist interest saw the native population less as convertible savage and more as malleable inferior, to be subjugated and controlled as a labour resource.[1]

Given these shifts, let us consider the "common knowledge" propagated by contemporary literary works, in order to locate the tradition which Conrad assimilated. This depiction of the Congolese African by one of the age's "spiritual fathers", P. P. Aurogard, is fairly typical:

The black race is certainly the race of Ham, the race cursed of God. There is nothing in particular which shows you this, but one can smell it, see it everywhere, and one cannot help feeling both compassion and terror when one sees these poor unfortunates. These black pagans are lazy, greedy, thieves, liars and given over to all kinds of vice [. . .] the scanty clothes

1. For fuller accounts of the representation of Africa, see for example the works of B. V. Street, *The Savage in Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); William Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900* (London: Greenwood, 1982); and H. Ridley, *Images of Imperial Rule* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

which these unfortunates wear make them even more savage and worthy of pity.²

In its characteristic self-assurance, its mixed motivation (the savage is both utterly beyond redemption and pitiable enough for funds to be contributed for spiritual welfare), and its unintentional self-contradiction (nothing shows you this but it can be seen), this account manages acrobatics of an almost metaphysical complexity,

Hammond and Jablow emphasise the unequivocally accepted racial determinism which underlay all such European representations of Africans of the period.³ Earlier polygenist views of the separate origin and species of Africans, according to which European races were inherently more developed and hierarchically superior, eventually gave way before the Darwinian monogenist theory of human evolution. But subsequent popularising versions of Darwin reconfirmed Europeans' sense of racial and cultural difference and superiority. Evolutionary theory then became the enabling ground for perceiving the African as a beastly and time-locked savage, our "contemporary ancestor". Physical ugliness, non-individuated uniformity of appearance, excessive sexual appetite and promiscuity are the recurrent characteristics of such people and a host of mental and moral failings allegedly reinforced the fact of Africans' social and cultural backwardness.

It would be inaccurate to say, however, that the eighteenth-century convention of the Noble Savage was out, and the vision of the ignoble one was in. The latter overlaid but did not entirely eradicate the former. The Noble Savage—quite as unhistoric, of course, as that of the later "contemporary ancestor"—fed a cultural and political interest in the "natural" and the "exotic" fostered by the Romantics and subsequent writers and painters, particularly in France, in works by Baudelaire, Nerval, Flaubert, and the immensely popular Pierre Loti. The imaginative function of Africa as exotic Other was twofold. First, it was a space to escape into, one from which materialistic bourgeois Europe could be criticised. Second, it held out the promise of self-discovery in a confrontation with the strange and unfamiliar. Stripped of its repressive European veneer, the authentic self awaited discovery in the landscape of Africa, where the burdens of "civilisation" could be shed. Thus, the "savage" Other could embody the freedom that Europeans desired in order to find their "real" selves.

These uses of the imagined Africa and the "savage", though overlaid and to some extent superceded by later imperial requirements,

2. Quoted in R. Slade, King Leopold's Congo (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962), p. 32.
3. D. Hammond and A. Jablow, The Myth of Africa (New York: The Library of Social Science, 1977).

were never quite erased. They continued to play an informing part in the discourse of the Other which Conrad assimilated. It was a discourse predicated on a structure of opposites. The "savage" was to be defined by and against what the perceiving Europeans understood themselves to be. The Other was negation, nature, animal, black. How these attributes were then evaluated depended on the needs to which the construction was put. In this economy of oppositions, desire and transgression lie in close alliance. But the transgression most to be feared was the transgression of "known" boundaries. Paradoxically, Westernised Africans, like Europeans "gone native", came to be regarded as particularly threatening to an order predicated on absolute difference: they confused and disrupted the natural order.

It is into this contradictory cultural field that we should place Conrad's Heart of Darkness, for it embodies a radically ambivalent tendency in representing the Other. At times it endorses stereotypic figures of the "savage" as "uncivilised" and "primitive"—though it does so often with the aim of questioning facile oppositions between (superior) Civilised and (inferior) Savage. On such occasions Conrad's implicit assertion—critical enough for Victorian middle-class ears—is, "We are savage primitives, too, beneath the skin". (But note, for this, the "savagery" of the Other has to be assumed.) At other times, his representation of the African offers a self-conscious critique of European representations, even to the point of questioning the very basis of such Otherness. In principle, the two tendencies vary according to the proximity or distance of the narrator (Marlow) from the subject of his observation. This is often quite literally a spatial proximity or distance. The closer he is to a "savage," the more subtle, less stereotypical, is his regard. The more specific the African's historical or political subjectivity, the more critical Marlow is of typical European representation. When, however, he elides this specificity and regards the African from a distance in time or space, the representation tends to endorse well-established European cultural stereotypes of primitive savages.

Two pivotal episodes in Heart of Darkness reveal the tension between endorsement and critique in Conrad: the appearance of the chain-gang soon after Marlow arrives at the Company's station and his subsequent up-river journey when he confronts what he perceives as the threatening mystery of the forest and its inhabitants. The erasure of precise location, of historical and ethnic specificity, gives to the native peoples he represents the appearance of the near-mythic. We are offered "natural man" stripped of the accoutrements of social reality: eternally present, at one with nature, offering some kind of lesson to "us". The translation into "primitive man" becomes all the easier if we are not preoccupied with the

specificities of the late nineteenth-century Congo but can let our imaginations freely inscribe the blank page of Otherness. We will need to return presently to the complex erotic component of this "blankness" in the representation of the doubly Other, the "savage" female, Kurtz's "mistress".

Less problematic for the cultural climate in which Conrad wrote is this representation of African natives:

> Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. . . . We were wanderers on the prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet . . . 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. (33–35)

In narrative terms, the journey is one of advance towards Kurtz with echoes of Stanley's search for Livingstone (as a sort of Holy Grail), a narrative with immense resonance in the popular mind. It is a journey of return, through a landscape as primordial as "the night of the first ages". The long forgotten becomes the present; the prehistoric the here and now. The formal qualities of the passage, particularly the use of the iterative past tense suggesting repeated, habitual actions ("we would," "there would be") make time seem to turn back on itself. The iterative tense perfectly mirrors the sense of time suspended. * * * The adoption of this verbal form is at once surreptitious, ideologically potent, and unconsciously poignant. For it asserts a permanence even after death: "they were, are and always will be".

Furthermore, topography and inhabitants merge. The dissolution of boundaries between the "primitive" and the natural world achieves a polymorphous state of threatening and fascinating otherness. The human body is expressed as an unindividuated mass of limbs; human speech is reduced to "incomprehensible frenzy". * * * [T]hese natives are absorbed into the "natural", a virtually dehistoricised space. The prehistoric wilderness is given anthropomorphic qualities—the power to look, to have inscrutable purposes—at the moment when the historical, social human being is all but erased. The human primitive, "pre-historic" man, transgresses the border between established categories, such as hu-

man/non-human, sane/insane, human/animal, in a way which both horrifies and fascinates Marlow:

> 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 [. . .] what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar . . . 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. (36)

The thematic thrust of Marlow's narrative radically disturbs the complacent sense of European superiority which his listeners, and Conrad's contemporary readers, would in all likelihood have shared. The thought that "civilised" behaviour may be just a veneer covering aggressive, passionate, incomprehensible energies was a fear too current to be comfortably dismissed. But in order to articulate it, Conrad needed to construct the African as an objectification of what it was they were anxious about. Thus, radical critique and a racist reactionary force combine in this stereotypical representation of the African Other, which simultaneously confirms while undercutting the European cultural myth of the Black as a contemporary ancestor.

The culturally, politically dominant reading of this myth was imperially complacent: we too were once like this, but how developed we are now! But, with a different Darwinian turn, Conrad has also articulated the underlying fear: if we came from this, what secret inheritance may be lurking in our character? (One can almost hear the class anxieties about having come from lowly stock.) But in either case the stereotype of the savage remains intact.

The same contradictory combination of fear and desire can be located in the depiction of the "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman" (60), Kurtz's native "mistress," as she is almost universally called in Conrad criticism. The appellation "mistress," of course, reveals a different order of stereotyping. Nowhere in the narrative is the black woman referred to as Kurtz's mistress; it is an *inferred* status. But neither for Marlow nor his listeners, nor for Conrad's implied readers, could the "logic" of this inferred stereotype be fully articulated. Nor would it need to be so articulated. As an unspoken "truth", it is always already known that the black native woman in nineteenth-century European narratives means sexual licence. The connotations are activated by a cultural system (with its assumptions about racial difference) which confirms the Black as "passionate" and "sexually active" and the black woman, specifically,

as embodying physical temptation and sexual gratification for the white male European. Like the representation of American Indians in the sixteenth century, the comparative nudity of the African woman was read as clear testimony of her transgressive sexuality. The power of the stereotype lies in its self-evidence, as the compliance of most of Conrad's twentieth-century critics testifies. What fascinated and terrified the colonising mind was the thought that the white man might "go native", cross the limits of the permissible and undermine the sexual foundations of the bourgeois world.

The phrase "wild and gorgeous apparition" reinforces Marlow's oxymoronic definition of the wilderness (the unearthly earth): utterly other and incomprehensible, it is nevertheless, indeed therefore, fascinatingly attractive. An incarnation of its seductive and potentially corrupting force, she stands undifferentiated from the wilderness. Its image and soul, in her well-armoured appearance she evokes the familiar Amazonian stereotype, a powerful female threat to the male, even as she is given an emphasis of tragic dignity and sorrow. Victim, like the wilderness, of the European invasion, she also threatens to be its vanquisher. Yet her status in reality is brought into question (as well it might be): she shares the "unearthliness" of the earth; she occupies a space on the borderline between the real and unreal, human and non-human, material and fantastic—an impossible position to occupy. For all her physicality, she is indeed an "apparition". She functions as an imaginative space onto which Marlow can project the meanings and desires of the European male gaze, while at the same time attributing these as "inherent" qualities to the object gazed at. The European can then "discover" his kinship and fascination for what he has imagined in her. But of course the inscribing is not declared. * * *

There is, moreover, a silencing [of the Other]. We hear *about* her speaking, but we do not hear her words. Like the monstrous natives, she is not allowed to come close enough to speak for herself. If her political space has been colonised, so has her linguistic one. Thus the ideological work of representation can go on unhindered by any entry into the historically specific, into the closer space of contestation and real difference which her talking may reveal. Indeed, were she to come closer she would get shot.

There are two instances in the novel, however, where proximity and contact go some way toward challenging the stereotypes the novel elsewhere depends on: the depictions of the chain-gang and the cannibal crew. The precise, impressionistic description of the former, with its withholding of the term "chain-gang" until the conditions of the natives' bodily presence has been established, shocks the reader into a fresher recognition of events. Indeed, the very process of signification—what is at stake in it—is defamiliarised,

held up for scrutiny. No longer can we feel comfortable writing them off as "just" a "chain-gang".

A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps . . . these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. (15–16)

Conrad's point here has everything to do with the nature and politics of linguistic representation: "They were called criminals"; "They were not enemies, they were not criminals." The "outraged law" (the phrase *and* the institution) is exposed to polemical critique: the real outrage may be the Law's representing the Black as criminal. Calling the Other by certain names legitimises our behaviour towards "it" accordingly: so everything depends on who is doing the looking and representing. However fleetingly, Marlow brings this concern home when, walking close to the chain-gang, he thinks of himself as being looked at:

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 . . . and seeing a white man on the path, hoisted his weapon to his shoulder with alacrity. This was simple prudence, white men being so much alike at a distance that he could not tell who I might be. 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 also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings.

Instead of going up, I turned and descended to the left. My idea was to let that chain-gang get out of sight before I climbed the hill. (16)

Marlow imagines, here, looking from the Other's viewpoint. Of course, he cannot naively adopt the Other's position, and the fact that they do not give him a glance indicates his separation from them as a European master. But the grin of the native guard, and the joke about white men all looking the same (which inverts the cliché and thus again defamiliarises the signifying act) work to explode stereotypic European generalisations about "the Black man". Identified as accomplice to the horror he witnesses, no wonder Marlow wants the chain-gang "out of sight". True, he is still projecting

a way of looking on to the Other; that is inescapable. But the stereotyping is signalled and fractured at the point when he locates himself temporally in the site of the viewed. Marlow thus briefly recognises the dialectics of viewing. In that act, he is forced to acknowledge that his own historical, political position implicates him. Embarrassed when his position is even mildly contested, he is no longer so keen to see or be seen. His (unsuccessful) form of erasure is to walk off into the grove. There, unfortunately for him (Conrad's political honesty here is absolute), he sees more evidence of the results of European well-meaning: cast-off and dying members of the chain-gang. For Marlow—and this is what Conrad is radically, consciously, showing us—the Other has come too close for comfort.

Similar proximity and realignment of perspective occurs with the cannibals on the steamer. In an off-hand sort of way Marlow introduces the reference: "Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place" (34), and it confounds the stereotype he has just encouraged in depicting those natives on shore. The attributes of "frenzied passion" and exotic culinary habits are ones with which our complicit imaginations might willingly toy. Cannibalism has been the stock-in-trade of European imaginations of the primitive Other since Herodotus, for it epitomises all forms of categorical transgression, all that "we are not". But here the stereotype gets undermined by Marlow's simple praise. "They were men one could work with and I'm grateful to them" (34). The restraint they show under attack and their surprising reticence to eat portly European managerial flesh despite their meagre rations are qualities commented on by Marlow in an approving manner. Conrad knows his audience well enough to evoke the cannibal reference, compulsory in late nineteenth-century "descriptions" of Africa, despite a complete lack of any firm evidence for its widespread existence.' But he does so to imply that, with close social and physical contact, under a scrutiny both linguistic and political, the stereotype dissolves.

This sort of proximity does not *deny* the alterity of the Other. What is contested is the complacent idea that "I already know" the Other; that my words can adequately represent the Other; and that it is my place and my right, as if disinterestedly, to do the representing. The recognition of proximity is not a sentimental or self-serving claim to identity. Nor can we claim to get behind our own understanding to adopt an allegedly neutral position of viewing the Other "just as it is". But we *can* be alerted to the degree to which our own projective imaginations, our own contradictions, seek to make of the Other the negative image of ourselves.

4. See William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979) for a critique of the mythic function of, and absence of anthropological evidence "proving," widespread cannibalism.

ANDREW MICHAEL ROBERTS

[Masculinity, Modernity, and Homosexual Desire]†

[T]he epistemology of Conrad's work is explicable in terms of (social) structures of male power and (psychic) structures of male desire. A discourse of knowledge, truth and ignorance plays a crucial part in the maintenance of these structures, reinforcing both masculine identity and male access to empowering knowledge, while enabling the symbolic, psychic and social exploitation of women. This discourse does not simply attribute knowledge to men and ignorance to women but variably associates women with particular forms of ignorance and knowledge in such a way as to make them available as symbols of a mysterious truth and objects of a secret knowledge while largely depriving them of the role of knowing subject. Conrad's texts participate in an ideological discourse which both produces 'truths' about women and produces a concept of femininity constructed as the Other of male knowledge. This Other is simultaneously, and paradoxically, the complementary ignorance against which male knowledge defines itself and a symbol of the ultimate truth which, though unattainable, represents a structurally important horizon of metaphysical knowledge. This discourse, like many discourses which evoke 'woman' as an archetype, is sustained by a willed ignorance concerning particular women. Conrad's work does not always uncritically reproduce such a discourse. In inviting the reader to empathize with women characters and with male characters who temporarily occupy a 'feminized' position, the fiction offers some critical purchase on these structures of exploitation, without ever fully analysing or stepping outside them.

* * *

The epistemological structure of 'Heart of Darkness' involves a pair of men (Marlow and Kurtz), a group of men (Marlow and his listeners on board the Nellie) and a pair of women (the African woman at the Inner Station and the 'Intended'). The pair of men is the locus of the discovery of a hidden truth; the pair of women represent the complementary exclusion, necessary to maintain the men's belief in the secrecy and power of that truth; the group of men foregrounds the problematics of interpretation but also the possibility of a wider circulation of that truth among men. The two women, in different ways, are excluded by the text from the subject-position of knowledge (that of the knower) and are made into

† From *Conrad and Masculinity* (New York: St. Martin's P, 2000), pp. 121–22, 125–26, 126–28, 130–33, 134–36. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. Notes are the author's.