HEART OF DARKNESS

JOSEPH CONRAD (originally Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski) was born in 1857 in a part of Poland long annexed by Russia. In 1862 his parents were exiled to Russia for their underground political activities, and both died while Conrad was a child. Aged 16, he left Poland for Marseille to take up a career at sea. After voyages to the Caribbean, he joined the British merchant service in 1878, sailing first in British coastal waters and then to the Far East and Australia. Soon coming to regard Britain as his new home, he became a British subject and obtained his master's certificate in 1886; began in 1889 to write his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, in English, his third language; and in 1894, aged 36, retired from the sea and soon married Jessie George, with whom he had two sons.

Conrad's first two novels, set in Malaysia, immediately announced the appearance of a significant new writer, described by one reviewer as a future 'Kipling of the eastern archipelago'. He produced his major fiction between 1897 and 1911, an arduously intense creative period that included *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900), 'Typhoon' (1903), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). However, while all of these works were critically acclaimed for their original subjects and boldly experimental techniques, they did not have popular impact, and it was not until 1914 with the publication of *Chance* that Conrad achieved commercial success. The 'eminent' older writer was lionized on a visit to America in 1923 and in the following year offered a knighthood, which he declined. He died in August 1924 at the age of 66.

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JOSEPH CONRAD

HEART OF DARKNESS

EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION

On 10 May 1890, Konrad Korzeniowski, aged 32, set sail from Bordeaux as a passenger in the SS *Ville de Maceio*, bound for West Africa. Of Polish descent and a merchant sailor for nearly two decades, he was going to the Congo Free State to take up a three-year contract of employment commanding a steamboat on the River Congo. In the event, illness, coupled with his own revulsion at what he saw of European colonial excesses, led him to return to Europe after only six months, suffering from dysentery and malaria. Eight years later, and by then forging his new career as a novelist under the pen name Joseph Conrad, he would draw upon these African memories to compose *Heart of Darkness*, a powerful and disturbing work that has acquired the status of an early Modernist classic and a modern myth about moral dereliction and the fragility of civilized values. According to his friend and mentor, Edward Garnett, Conrad's Congo experience was 'the turning-point in his mental life and … its effects on him determined his transformation from a sailor to a writer'; the spectacle of 'baseness and greed … swept away the generous illusions of his youth' and permanently damaged his health.[1] Much of the story's enduring appeal lies in its generically multifaceted nature. Among other things, this is a colonial adventure story, a travelogue, a coded autobiography, a modern psychological drama and a political satire.

This introduction will outline the background and sources for the novella, address aspects of its artistry and themes, and survey the history of its reception. In the process, details of the plot are inevitably disclosed. Since the impact of reading is inseparable from the pleasure of experiencing narrative suspense, surprises and revelations, we urge the reader to enjoy the book before turning to this introduction.

[1] *Letters from Conrad, 1895 to 1924*, ed. Edward Garnett (1928), p. xii.

FACTS AND FICTION

Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski was born in 1857, to Polish parents, in Berdyczów, in the Ukraine. The partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 had erased Poland from the map of Europe, but Conrad's parents, Apollo and Ewa, were dedicated patriots who sacrificed themselves to the cause of Polish nationalism, and 'Konradek' was orphaned by the age of 11. Six years later, shortly before turning 17, he left his landlocked homeland for Marseille to become a sailor, earning his tutor's charge: 'You are an incorrigible, hopeless Don Quixote.'[1] For the next two decades Conrad served as a merchant seaman, mainly in British ships, working his way up through the ranks and earning his master's certificate in 1886, the same year in which he became a naturalized British subject. His maritime experiences took him across the globe in the great age of Empire, when so-called Britannia 'ruled the waves' and her merchant fleet negotiated the colonial trade upon which, by the end of the nineteenth century, the country depended.

In November 1889, deciding to 'turn fresh-water sailor', Conrad travelled to Brussels to be interviewed for a post in the Congo Free State. This vast region, some 2 million square kilometres in West Africa, was the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium. While Belgium had no colonial ambition, her king was not so reserved. Attracted by the 'Scramble for Africa' among European powers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he declared: 'I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of this magnificent African cake.'[2] This aspiration was realized in 1885 when Leopold, ostensibly a philanthropic neutral committed to abolishing the slave trade, persuaded the European powers, wary of rival competitors in Africa, to accept him as owner and ruler of the Congo Free State.

In this personal fiefdom, Leopold appointed Henry Morton Stanley as his chief agent, responsible for establishing steamer routes, signing treaties with native chiefs and setting up a chain of commercial and scientific stations that, once garrisoned, were nothing less than armed outposts of Empire; back in Belgium, business ventures were

[1] Joseph Conrad, *A Personal Record* (1912), p. 50.
[2] Quoted in Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (1991), p. 22.

established to manage and exploit this new market, including, in the shadow of the royal palace in Brussels, the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, whose director, Albert Thys, interviewed Conrad. Thys's responsibilities included both the construction of a railway from Matadi, near the mouth of the Congo River, to Léopoldville (present-day Kinshasa), some 250 miles (400 kilometres) upstream, and the running of steamships on the river between Léopoldville and Stanley Falls.[1] It was this latter, subsidiary company formed in 1888, the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo (Belgian Limited Company for Trade in the Upper Congo), that employed Conrad. As *Heart of Darkness* reveals, the Congo Free State was then rich in ivory, prompting Conrad the author to describe what he had seen in 1890 as 'the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration'.[2] When the novella was published at the turn of the century, the dawning of the age of the motor car made the equatorial forests of rubber trees even more attractive to industrial Europe, and for this commodity untold African lives were sacrificed to European greed in an orgy of exploitation and brutality. Conrad would later liken the Europeans in Africa to 'modern Conquistadores': 'Leopold is their Pizarro, Thys their Cortez.'[3] When Leopold II was finally brought to the bar of international opinion for his crimes, the Belgian government voted to relieve their king of his African territory, annexing the Congo Free State in 1908.

In May 1890, Conrad was contracted by the Belgian company to replace Johannes Freiesleben, the captain of their steamship *Floride*, who had been killed by natives three months earlier. He described the 'devilish haste' of his departure in a letter: 'If you had only seen all the tin boxes and revolvers, the high boots and the tender farewells … all the bottles of medicine and all the affectionate wishes I took away with me', declaring himself 'a Polish nobleman, cased in British tar'. Conrad set sail for Africa in a ship carrying French troops, company personnel and the rails and sleepers for constructing a railway in the Congo. He voiced his trepidation in a letter from Tenerife: 'The screw turns and carries me off to the unknown' (*Letters*, I, 52, 51). The ship

[1] The Matadi–Léopoldville railway was officially opened on 1 July 1898. For an account of its construction, see Louis Goffin, *Le chemin de fer du Congo (Matadi–Stanley Pool)* (1907). Stanley Falls is present-day Kisangani.
[2] Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays* (1926), p. 14. [3] *Letters*, III, 101.

stopped at various ports of call – in Senegal, French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Gabon – before, on 12 June, Conrad disembarked at Boma, a port town on the Congo River, some 60 miles (100 kilometres) upstream from the estuary. By the next day he had travelled to nearby Matadi, the last navigable port on the river. To be united with his ship, he would have to travel overland from here.

Conrad kept a diary of impressions and events during his fortnight in Matadi and his month-long overland trek of 230 miles (370 kilometres) to Nselemba on Stanley Pool.[1] As well as the factual details of the journey – daily distances; descriptions of the terrain; place and river names; the Company agents and missionaries encountered – 'The Congo Diary' offers tantalizing glimpses into life under Belgian rule in the Congo Free State. For example, the entry for 3 July includes: 'Met an off[ic]^{cr} of the State inspecting; a few minutes afterwards saw at a camp[in]^{g} place the dead body of a Backongo – Shot? Horrid smell.'[2] The entries become progressively more disenchanted, and by the time that Conrad arrived at his destination, on 2 August, he pronounced: 'Glad to see the end of this stupid tramp. Feel rather seedy.'

After hearing from a passing agent that 'All the steamers [are] disabled. One wrecked', Conrad arrived in Kinshasa to find his fears realized: his anticipated command, the *Floride*, had been wrecked on 18 July. He appears to have quarrelled with his superior, Camille Delcommune, possibly about the delay in reporting for duty. The sparse correspondence from this time confirms his negative feelings. His maternal uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski, noted: 'I see from your last letter that you feel a deep resentment towards the Belgians for exploiting you so mercilessly', while playfully referring to 'your period of captivity – not Babylonian this time but Belgian'.[3] Conrad was quickly put to work: on 3 August, serving as supernumerary, he set off in the steamboat *Roi des Belges* (*King of the Belgians*) under the command of a Dane, Captain Ludvig Koch, bound for Stanley Falls, about 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) upriver, a journey apparently undertaken to aid a disabled company steamboat. The handful of company agents on board included

[1] See Map 2 below. [2] For the text of 'The Congo Diary', see Appendix A below.
[3] *Conrad's Polish Background: Conrad's Letters to and from Polish Friends*, ed. Zdzisław Najder (1964), p. 133.

Alphonse Kayaerts, whose name Conrad used in his tale 'An Outpost of Progress', also set in Africa, and Delcommune, while the ship's two dozen crew were probably Bangala tribesmen from the upper reaches of the river.

Founded by Stanley as a trading post in 1883, Stanley Falls was a terminus for steamboat navigation – above it, rapids made the river impassable – and the centre of the ivory trade. Estimated to be at the centre of the African continent, the town lies at the northernmost point of the natural waterway connecting central Africa with Matadi, and is thus strategically positioned for controlling waterborne cargo on the Congo. Decades later, Conrad recalled his impressions of the visit: 'Everything was dark under the stars. Every other white man on board was asleep. I was glad to be alone on deck smoking the pipe of peace after an anxious day. The subdued thundering mutter of Stanley Falls hung in the heavy night air of the last navigable reach of the Upper Congo' (Appendix C, p. 104).

By the time of his arrival there, on 1 September, Conrad was ill with dysentery. Five days later, when the captain himself fell sick, Delcommune formally appointed Conrad as his replacement, and the return journey began on or by 8 September. Also aboard was a sick company agent, Georges-Antoine Klein, who died on 21 September and was buried at Chumbiri. Klein's surname appears four times in the manuscript of *Heart of Darkness*, where it was later changed to 'Kurtz'.[1] Conrad's brief command was finished by 15 September, when Koch was well enough to resume. The downriver journey was swift, accomplished in nearly half the time it took to travel upriver, with the boat returning to Kinshasa on 24 September.

Conrad had hopes of immediately joining a longer expedition. On the day of his return, he wrote to a Polish cousin that he was busy preparing 'for a new expedition to the River Kasai', expecting to be away 'for a few months, possibly even for a year'. Disillusionment followed swiftly. Just two days later, another of his letters mentioned his decided 'regret' at coming to Africa: 'Everything here is repellent to me. Men and things, but men above all. And I am repellent to them, also' (*Letters*, 1, 58, 62). Whatever hopes of a command he still

[1] The connection between the real name and the fictional one is playfully reinforced by the similar meanings of the German words *klein* and *kurz*: 'small' and 'short'.

harboured appeared to have been dashed by Camille Delcommune, whom he described as 'a common ivory dealer with base instincts who considers himself a merchant although he is only a kind of African shop-keeper'. Less than four months into his contract, plagued by fevers and dysentery, and with no hope of promotion or a command, Conrad pronounced himself 'homesick for the sea' (*Letters*, I, 62). From this point on, the slender documentary evidence allows only hints and glimpses of his progress. He was not successful in securing his anticipated command of the *Floride*, and in a letter to his uncle dated 19 October he confirmed that he would soon return to Europe.[1]

How Conrad was able to extricate himself from his three-year contract is a mystery, although his bouts of severe illness possibly provided sufficient grounds. His return to the coast, part of it by canoe, was slow and attended by illness, which meant that he was carried in a hammock at times. By 24 October he was at Fumemba (Mfumu Mbé in 'The Congo Diary'), 'continually sick with dysentery and fever'.[2] On 27 October he headed for Manyanga, where he broke his journey, very probably to recuperate, as on the upward trek. Jessie Conrad remembered being told 'how nearly he had died from dysentery while being carried to the coast when he left the Congo'.[3] Little is known of the intervening weeks except that, by 4 December, Conrad was back at Matadi and soon sailed from Boma for Europe, having served six months of his contract and made just one trip up and down the river in the company's employ. By late January 1891 he was in Brussels, and on 1 February had arrived back in London. Much of the first half of the year was spent recovering from his journey: for most of March he was confined to hospital, suffering from malaria, rheumatism and neuralgia; in May he travelled to Switzerland for convalescence and hydrotherapy.

*

In his 'Author's Note' of 1917, Conrad described *Heart of Darkness* as 'experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers'

[1] The command of the *Floride* went to a Captain Carlier, whose name is given to one of the two hapless European colonists in 'An Outpost of Progress'.
[2] Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Life* (2007), p. 162.
[3] Jessie Conrad, *Joseph Conrad and his Circle* (1935), p. 13.

(Appendix D, p. 117). The relationship between life and art is a persistent theme in Conrad's comments on fiction. He famously credited not only the origins of his first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), but also his entire subsequent fictional output to his actual meeting with a Dutch trader at an isolated settlement in north-eastern Borneo: 'But if I had not got to know Almayer pretty well it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print.'[1] Similarly, in his essay 'Henry James: An Appreciation' (1904), Conrad claimed that 'Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing', continuing that it is based 'on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena'.[2]

Conrad's scattered observations on literature identify him with the key aesthetic debates of his age, in particular the relationship of art to life, which is the great shaping force in the development of the nineteenth-century novel culminating in the experiments with representation in literary Modernism. A century of scholarship devoted to the sources of Conrad's fictions – including Norman Sherry's meticulous *Conrad's Eastern World* (1966) and *Conrad's Western World* (1971) – has revealed the degree to which the writing draws, and is contingent, upon the author's life experiences, and argued that a failure to recognize this dependency is to receive the works in impoverished form. The wealth of life experiences upon which Conrad could draw led Henry James to observe: 'No one has *known* – for intellectual use – the things you know, & you have, as the artist of the whole matter, an authority that no one has approached.'[3] Underscoring *Heart of Darkness* is historical verisimilitude and factual autobiography, as attested in such documentary evidence as Conrad's two Congo notebooks.

It is therefore unsurprising that generations of scholars have mined the documents and details of Conrad's life for correspondences in the art. As noted, Conrad himself sometimes encourages this inquiry into 'the actual facts of the [biographical] case' lying behind or within his works. For example, in *Heart of Darkness* one of the prototypes for the composite figure of Kurtz is Georges-Antoine Klein, the sick company agent taken aboard the *Roi des Belges* at Stanley Falls who

[1] *A Personal Record*, p. 83. Carel Willem Olmeijer (1842–1900) was a Java-born Eurasian living in Berau.
[2] *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 19.
[3] Henry James to Conrad, 1 November 1906, *Portrait*, p. 58.

died on the downriver journey. Even the occasion of the tale can be traced to real-life sources. On the surface, the narration recalls and is shaped by a recognizable tradition: that of seamanlike yarning to a small listening audience. But precise factual experience also informs this literary convention as Conrad draws upon actual trips he enjoyed on the Thames Estuary in the early 1890s with his friend G. F. W. Hope (a retired sailor and company director, like his counterpart in the story) in the latter's boat, also called the *Nellie*.[1]

Correspondence between Conrad's and Marlow's experiences, present in the broad outlines of the story, is also ingrained in its fine detail. Thus, when Marlow claims, at the beginning of the return journey, that the 'brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress' (p. 72), this seemingly throw-away piece of information has its basis in fact: the *Roi des Belges*'s return passage was similarly twice as fast as her laboured upward journey. In one of the tale's most strikingly resonant images, a French man-of-war is depicted as 'firing into a continent'. The absurdly disproportionate scale leads to Marlow's comment, 'There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight' (p. 14). Again, however, the image seems to have had its basis in observed 'facts'. When Conrad was asked about the French gunboat in the story, he responded: 'If I say that the ship which bombarded the coast was French, it is quite simply because *it was* a French ship. I recall its name – the *Seignelay*. It was during the war(!) with Dahomey' (*Letters*, III, 94). Such extraordinary literalism underpins much of the story's textual detail.

But works of literature are judged not by their fidelity to their authors' life experiences but rather by their merits as works of art, and the author of a story famous for its luminous 'misty' halo (p. 5) has no naïve belief that the artwork is merely the sum of its biographical and real-life origins. Conrad fully recognized the problem of trying to reduce art to biography, and of the 'fatal'

[1] Hope recalled these excursions in his memoir, 'Friend of Conrad' (in *Conrad Between the Lines: Documents in a Life*, ed. Gene M. Moore, Allan H. Simmons and J. H. Stape (2000), pp. 1–56). See too J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles, 'Marlow's Audience in "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness": A Historical Note', *The Conradian*, 31, no. 1 (2006), 104–16.

consequences for the work of art in doing so. In a letter of 1922 to Richard Curle, he insists upon the differences between factual source and fictional artefact, emphasizing the indefiniteness and suggestiveness essential to the artist's fully creative re-engagement with past experiences:

> It is a strange fate that everything that I have, of set artistic purpose, laboured to leave indefinite, suggestive, in the penumbra of initial inspiration, should have that light turned on to it and its insignificance (as compared with I might say without megalomania the ampleness of my conceptions) exposed for any fool to comment upon or even for average minds to be disappointed with. Didn't it ever occur to you, my dear Curle, that I knew what I was doing in leaving the facts of my life and even my tales in the background. Explicitness, my dear fellow, is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion. You seem to believe in literalness and explicitness, in facts and also in expression. Yet nothing is more clear than the utter insignificance of explicit statement and also its power to call attention away from things that matter in the region of art.[1]

There is nothing ambiguous here: factual and biographical details are subordinate to aesthetic concerns; the 'explicitness' of facts is secondary – and, indeed, inimical – to the 'suggestiveness' that defines art. What matters in Conrad's fictions, then, is not that they are grounded in real-life sources but rather that these sources are creatively transmuted into art, in the process being invariably enriched by other sources – by Conrad's extraordinarily rich reading, for example. As the quotation suggests, Conrad the writer appears to be Janus-like in looking in two directions: he is both faithful to the facts of his life and yet insists upon the freedom to treat these facts with adventurous artistic licence. In a letter to a fellow Pole in 1903, he claimed that 'Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning.'[2] Clearly, this 'duplex' nature can be traced in his writing, too.

How Conrad's experiences in 1890 inform the events of *Heart of Darkness* illustrates this point. For example, Marlow's appointment to replace a Danish steamboat captain, Fresleven, who has been killed by the natives has its basis in factual history: Captain Johannes Freiesleben was indeed killed by natives on 29 January 1890 at Tchumbiri. Various sources confirm the incident, probably the result of a cultural misunderstanding combined with heavy-handedness, in

[1] *Letters*, VII, 456–7.

[2] *Letters*, III, 89.

which a chief's son avenged his father's humiliation at the hands of Captain Freiesleben.[1] A year after the event, the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo* claimed that 'persistent ill-will and acts of aggression' in the region had culminated in the captain's death and rendered inevitable the reprisals that followed. In Marlow's account, the broad outline of events remains the same, but the incidental detail and the tone creatively realign the incident: for example, the tracing of its origins to a 'misunderstanding about some hens' emphasizes the excessive and farcical nature of Fresleven's actions; the 'merciless' beating administered by 'the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs' (p. 9) dramatizes the gulf between the perception of colonialism and its reality; and the use of multiple perspectives ensures that the affair is presented from competing European and African viewpoints. In this manner, the 'glorious affair', in Marlow's ironic phrase, is symptomatic of the, equally ironic, 'noble cause' of European involvement in Africa, and the sequence sets the tone for the fable of unease and disenchantment to follow.

Conrad's possible borrowings from 'The Congo Diary' provide a further example of how he used his sources with both fidelity and licence. This daily record of his overland trek corresponds to one lengthy paragraph in the novella describing Marlow's 'two hundred mile tramp' (p. 20). But Conrad appears eager to adapt or cast off the factual details, both to generate atmosphere – for example, where his Africa included trading posts, markets, camping places and mission stations, Marlow's is a world of 'abandoned villages' and the night-time 'tremor of far off drums' – and for dramatic and critical effect, as when the unexplained bodies of dead Africans are symbolically recast as victims of exploitation: 'Now and then a carrier dead in harness, at rest in the long grass near the path, with an empty water-gourd and his long staff lying by his side. A great silence around and above'. Marlow devotes nearly half of the description of his journey to his 'white companion', who contracts fever and has to be carried in a hammock, but so heavy is he that the bearers mutiny and, despite Marlow's 'speech in English, with gestures' (p. 21), eventually throw over their burden and desert. The sequence recalls Conrad's diary entries about his own travelling companion, Prosper Harou,

[1] *Conrad's Western World*, pp. 15–22.

particularly those for 30 and 31 July (see Appendix A, pp. 90–1), which, while including the record, 'Great difficulty in carrying Harou. – Too heavy. Bother!', do not mention desertion. Here, as elsewhere, Conrad's literal sources become less important as the demands of the story take over. His stated policy of developing beyond 'the penumbra of initial inspiration' into 'the region of art' is evident, too, in the narrative's overall shift in emphasis: where the tale begins with concrete images, for example rivets and decaying machinery, these increasingly give way to abstraction and suggestiveness. Conrad the writer seems increasingly anxious to break free from objective facts in the pursuit of an impressionistic art, ensuring that factual correspondences are less important than the hauntingly spectral atmosphere 'enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze' (p. 5).

NARRATION AND THEMES

ACCORDING TO Virginia Woolf, 'Conrad was compound of two men; together with the sea captain dwelt that subtle, refined, and fastidious analyst whom he called Marlow.'[1] In *Heart of Darkness*, this 'most discreet, understanding man', as Conrad described Marlow,[2] provides the conduit between life and art, the means by which the author's experiences are transmuted into art. But while Marlow's story has its genesis in Conrad's visit to the Congo, articulating the author's own sense of bewilderment and revulsion, neither the continent nor the country is explicitly named in the story. Rather, Conrad ensures that Marlow's experience of Belgian avarice and brutality reflects upon European colonialism generally, both contemporary and historical, to underline the timeless point that the 'conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much' (p. 7).

Marlow's story is embedded within a frame narrative, a structural arrangement that creates sudden and disconcerting connections. As part of his introduction, the unidentified narrator describes the occasion of the tale: a few friends gathered for a pleasure cruise in the

[1] Virginia Woolf, 'Joseph Conrad', in *The Common Reader* ([1925] 1942), pp. 285–6.
[2] 'Author's Note', Appendix D, p. 116.

Thames Estuary, whiling away time as they wait for the tide to turn. Marlow's embedded narrative will shake the foundations of this familiar and secure world. His audience is composed of British ex-sailors, now professional men – a company director, a lawyer and an accountant – each of whom will have a counterpart in the tale to follow, inviting unsettling connections between the colonial excesses that Marlow encounters and the practices of colonialism generally, at a moment when a quarter of the world's population belonged to the British Empire. It is surely no accident that, in the frame narrator's paean to Britain's imperial past, the phrase frequently used to describe the British Empire ('the empire on which the sun never sets') is echoed and playfully undermined across a paragraph break, as eulogy collapses into demotic reality: 'The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires. / The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream and lights began to appear along the shore' (p. 5); or that this reference is soon followed by Marlow's anecdote about the Roman colonization of Britain that, even while it identifies two historical world empires, Roman and British, serves as a reminder that all empires are destined to decline and fall.

The effect of the story's frame narration makes itself felt in two ways. First, it serves to create a telescoping effect, propelling the reader inwards: Conrad invents a surrogate, a frame narrator, who tells a story about Marlow, who tells a story about a man named Kurtz. This effect has, in turn, supported the generations of critics who associate Marlow's literal upriver voyage with a symbolic, psychological journey 'inwards', into the human unconscious. But, in a challenge to structural order, the frame fails to contain the embedded narrative, whose terms spill over into the frame narration, as demonstrated both by the obsession with 'brooding gloom' in the opening paragraphs and the note on which the novella concludes – 'the tranquil waterway … seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness' (p. 83). As Samuel Beckett said of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, it is as if the 'whisky bears a grudge against the decanter'.[1]

This idea that Marlow's narrative is still ongoing, still in progress at the end of the novella, is a function of his story-telling method.

[1] Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (1965), pp. 21–2.

According to the narrator, 'to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale' (p. 5). In other words, the import of a Marlow tale is to be found in the ambience and mood it generates for the listener. Conrad actively sought the reader's collaboration in the production of meaning, telling a friend 'one writes only half the book; the other half is with the reader' (*Letters*, I, 370). In the case of *Heart of Darkness*, the full meaning of the tale exists in the lingering unease about colonialism and claims about the civilized European self. This unease extended farther than Conrad could have anticipated: in a letter of 7 October 1909, a year after Leopold II had been compelled to relinquish sovereignty of the Congo Free State, the founder of the Congo Reform Association, E. D. Morel, described *Heart of Darkness* as simply 'the most powerful thing ever written on the subject'.[1]

Marlow's narrative begins with a biblical allusion: '"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth"' (p. 5; and see 15*n.*).[2] While this allusion establishes suggestive parallels – between the Britain as perceived by the Roman invaders, and the Africa as viewed through European eyes – it is as telling that Marlow begins *in medias res*, with the conjunction 'And' suggesting that he is responding to a conversation to which the reader is not privy. While his tale is unbroken, apart from a few interjections from his audience, the stylistic emphasis upon it as an oral narrative is significant. First-person recollection, by its confessional nature, dramatizes the act of bearing witness to the events recounted. In this case, though, the created illusion of orality also serves a discreet political purpose, as a counterpoint to the literate and written culture of the colonist. The machinations of colonialism are facilitated by written and printed documents: the child Marlow is first enthralled by 'the biggest [space] – the most blank so to speak' (p. 8) on a map; a signed contract confirms his employment (p. 10); justification for colonial intervention is 'let loose in print' (p. 13); African labourers are indentured with 'all the legality of time contracts' (p. 17–18); the company accountant keeps his books 'in apple-pie order' (p. 19); Kurtz constructs a glowingly hyperbolic 'Report', and so on.

[1] Morel to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (in Edmund Dene Morel, *History of the Congo Reform Movement*, ed. William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (1968), p. 205*n.*).
[2] A cross-reference to one of the explanatory 'Notes' is indicated by the relevant note number with an accompanying *n.*

In stylistic contrast to these documents, Marlow's spoken account facilitates and articulates an alternative record of colonialism (as does Kurtz's cried-out confession, 'The horror! The horror!' (p. 74)). Marlow himself continually emphasizes the oral character of his narration in such asides as 'This is the worst of trying to tell . . .' (p. 51) or when bemoaning his struggle to communicate: 'Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream' (p. 29). In this manner, orality dramatizes resistance to tired colonial clichés that pretend to superior understanding.

Partially reduplicating Conrad's own experience, Marlow's tale takes the form of a quest narrative, charting his journey to rescue the totemic Mr Kurtz from deep in the jungle. But this is a journey of disenchantment: the farther upriver Marlow ventures, the less coherent and sustainable seem any claims that justify European involvement in Africa or support such populist justifications as 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways' (p. 13). No sooner has Marlow arrived at the first Company station than he encounters all the trappings of civilized Europe in states of dereliction, entropy and abandonment: a boiler is 'wallowing in the grass'; a discarded and undersized railway truck 'looked as dead as the carcass of some animal'; and everywhere are 'pieces of decaying machinery' (p. 16). Anticipating the collapse of European morality itself, the suggestion is that these items, removed from their context, are rendered superfluous. By extension, and even more unsettlingly, European civilized values are shown to be relative rather than absolute: thus, once in Africa, Fresleven is no longer 'the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked' (p. 9), and Kurtz is unrecognizable from the man whose 'goodness' once 'shone in every act' (p. 82).

The stages of Marlow's journey towards Kurtz are carefully designed to convey a sense of grim inevitability. Most obviously, progress towards Kurtz is measured by what Marlow finds at the successive company stations. Where Kurtz had proclaimed, '"Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course but also for humanizing, improving, instructing!"' (p. 35), each actually serves only to provide a further stage in Marlow's disillusionment. The first station reveals the brutality of racial exploitation, particularly evident in the 'grove of death' sequence (p. 17–18). Next, at the Central Station, the ironically named 'pilgrims' appear to Marlow to be enthralled by the prospect of ivory, while Kurtz's

tantalizing reputation grows: he is a 'special being' sent to Africa 'for the guidance of the cause entrusted to us by Europe' (p. 27). But in opposition to these twinned obsessions, of ivory and Kurtz, the presence of the wilderness itself steadily acquires the status of an inimical force, as 'something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion' (p. 24). Finally, at the Inner Station, with all signs of civilized restraint abandoned, Kurtz's dwelling is surrounded by human heads on stakes and he himself has 'taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land' (p. 52). Part of this horror lies in the fact that Marlow hints at, but does not explain, Kurtz's activities, as though language were inadequate for the task. Instead, we learn that the latter presided 'at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites' (p. 53). To Edward Garnett, *Heart of Darkness* was 'the acutest analysis of the deterioration of the white man's *morale*, when he is let loose from European restraint, and planted down in the tropics as an "emissary of light" armed to the teeth, to make trade profits out of the "subject races"'.[1]

The bulwarks of civilized behaviour are rendered increasingly fragile and illusory, as Marlow finds himself among company agents who are cut adrift critically and morally in the pursuit of their fantasies of wealth and power. He communicates his own bewilderment through language that becomes steadily more figural: as he travels deeper into the continent, the experience becomes dreamlike and the mood hallucinatory, the early concrete images giving way to abstractions. Thus, the stillness of his surroundings resembles 'the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention' (p. 36). The African wilderness emerges less as a geographical place than a symbolic space that, even while it reflects and accommodates European dreams of wealth and power, has a personified presence. When Kurtz's African mistress first appears, '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' (p. 65).

Marlow's journey is circular: like the narrative itself, which ends where it started, aboard the *Nellie*, he travels upriver to rescue and retrieve Kurtz, only to travel down the river again. Similarly, his

[1] *Academy and Literature*, 6 December 1902, pp. 606–7.

venture begins and ends in Brussels, 'the sepulchral city' (p. 26). Such circularity obviously undermines the notion of colonialism as 'progress', and is also of a piece with other dramatic reversals in the tale. For example, Kurtz's avaricious pursuit of ivory leads to a playful transformation: 'The wilderness had patted him on the head, and behold it was like a ball – an ivory ball' (p. 52). But if Kurtz is, here, comically identified with the object of his lust, such reversals steadily acquire the status of resistance, suggesting that Africa is actively defying him: 'But the wilderness had found him out early and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion' (p. 62). The European 'invasion' of the wilderness engenders a counter-invasion of the European by the wilderness. This inversion continues when Marlow returns to a Europe founded on values that he now perceives to be hypocritical and whose civilization he sees as a veneer concealing the potential for barbarity. His predicament is one of modern alienation, the state of being unable to find a home in the society to which he yet belongs. As T. S. Eliot puts it in 'Gerontion', 'After such knowledge what forgiveness?' The sense of dislocation and estrangement that Marlow experienced in Africa is repeated when he returns to Europe. This identification of these two 'worlds' questions the perception that one might be superior to the other, further eroding the claims upon which a colonial mentality rests. Nor is Marlow willing to recount the truth of his experience. He lies to the Intended about Kurtz, feeling instead that their discussion is informed by 'the murmurs of wild crowds, the faint ring of incomprehensible words cried from afar, the whisper of a voice speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness' (p. 81). In the process, Marlow reveals his inextricable implication in the very lie about colonists and colonialism from which he had sought to distance himself.

STYLE

Published in the late-Victorian period, *Heart of Darkness* belongs to the first wave of Modernist texts. Conrad identified himself with the Modernist movement in a letter to his publisher in 1902, the year of the story's publication in book form. Pointedly distancing himself from the tradition of English prose that included Walter Scott, W. M. Thackeray and George Eliot, he claimed a wider European heritage: 'I am *modern*, and I would rather recall Wagner the musician

and Rodin the Sculptor who both had to starve a little in their day' (*Letters*, II, 418). Modernism in the arts, corresponding roughly to the period from 1880 to 1930, articulated the prevailing climate of scepticism and doubt towards inherited values as the influence of thinkers such as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud took root. Reflecting Ezra Pound's injunction to 'Make It New', art forms were increasingly characterized by technical and stylistic experimentation, with the emphasis falling upon impressionism and subjectivity – on *how* rather than *what* we see.

Shortly before drafting *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad composed a formal statement of his literary poetics in his 'Preface' to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), which includes his famous statement: 'My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*' (p. 7). With its emphasis upon technique, the 'Preface' articulates the fundamental concerns of literary Modernism and its assiduous attention to *le mot juste*, reminding us of why Conrad is regarded as one of the great stylists in the language:

> All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music – which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage. (pp. 6–7)

What Merleau-Ponty noted of Paul Cézanne's paintings rings equally true for Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*: he wanted 'to make *visible* how the world *touches* us'.[1] The experimental perspectives and fractured forms of Impressionism and Cubism find their correlatives in Marlow's narrative, where setting becomes a sensory counterpart to experience; the development and progress of the narrative is analogous to the upriver journey it describes; and the poetic lyricism of the prose is a function of carefully chosen detail.

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt', in *Sense and Non-Sense* (1991), p. 19.

Marlow's first-person narration enlists and depends upon a range of stylistic techniques for its effectiveness. The circumstances of the novella's first publication obscured the continuity and flow of the oral occasion. Deemed too long for uninterrupted serial publication, it was first published in three monthly instalments of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a tripartite division preserved when the same firm republished the tale in book form. The current edition restores the pre-print version of the text and, in doing so, reproduces the impact of unbroken narrative, allowing the reader to receive the tale as told, continuous and without respite other than the few interruptions by Marlow's listeners. While broadly chronological, the narration itself is characterized by hesitations, digressions and repetitions. Such features are technical counterparts to Marlow's quest for what he calls '[t]he essentials of this affair' (p. 41). Allied to this mode of telling, Marlow's self-conscious admissions of inadequacy before his task – 'it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence' (p. 29) – dramatize a narrating consciousness commenting upon its own uncertain progress.

Marlow recounts experiences that have to be dredged from his memory, ensuring a double narrative in which the time of the telling aboard the *Nellie* and the time of the tale set in Africa are brought together through a combination of techniques designed to replicate, for both the listener within the tale and the reader without, the immediacy of witnessed experience. Among these techniques is what Ian Watt christened 'delayed decoding',[1] whereby the listener–reader is invited to share Marlow's experience 'in real time', as it were, understanding – or 'decoding' – the unfolding events at the same rate as he does. For example, when the steamer is attacked, what Marlow initially mistakes for 'Sticks, little sticks … flying about' turn out to be 'Arrows by Jove! We were being shot at' (p. 48); in the same sequence, the spear that kills the helmsman is initially thought to be a cane wrested 'from somebody on shore' (p. 49); and, most famously, the ornamental 'round carved balls' on the posts surrounding Kurtz's house are discovered to be decapitated human heads (pp. 56, 61). In each case, Marlow's narration faithfully replicates his initial confusion and subsequent shock and revision; the reader, of course, experiences the same and is, thus, implicated in Marlow's quest for understanding.

[1] Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (1979), p. 175.

In this manner, his narrative becomes a guided meditation on an experience that the reader has shared.

Marlow's description of his arduous voyage, with its emphasis upon navigating the complexities and snags of the unknown river, quickly provides an apt metaphor for the reader's experience of trying to negotiate Marlow's tale, with its hidden depths and surprises. Adding to this fusion of literal and figural journeys, the voyage into the unknown can be cast as a journey into human psychology, where latent motives for actions are probed and the vibrant forest setting doubles as a realm where the imagination wanders unchecked. In this way, Marlow's quest for Kurtz doubles as an Odyssey of self-discovery in which his tale explores the scope and limits of identity, and the necessities and restrictions of social cohesion. To evoke this quest, the narrative renders porous such rigid divisions as those between the external and internal worlds, or between the factual and symbolic realms, and, instead, encourages their interplay by making a virtue of indefiniteness and suggestiveness. At one extreme, this approximates to cinematic dissolve, as when the coloured lights at play on the Thames, reflecting 'the traffic of the great City' (p. 7), anticipate the colours on the map of Africa that Marlow sees in the Company's offices (p. 10). More subtly, paradox and oxymoron blend contradictory terms by blurring their boundaries, as in the paired descriptors used to introduce Kurtz's African mistress: she is 'savage *and* superb, wild eyed *and* magnificent' (p. 65; emphasis added), the figure of speech enacting Marlow's confused sense of estrangement and fascination. The exotic location itself acquires a liminal personality: it is at once a site of violent colonization and appropriation, and, at the same time, a space where the imagination is given free play and mirrored; it is a particularized and symbolic landscape, simultaneously invigorating and claustrophobic, vibrant and sombre. The narrative's cumulative emphasis upon fluid boundaries reaches its peak when Marlow concludes of Kurtz: 'It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through' (p. 75).

Interpretive cruxes in the narrative provide an extension of blurred boundaries, with the reader left to resolve the dilemmas faced by Marlow. For example, despite Marlow's emphatic assertion, 'I hate, detest and can't bear a lie' (p. 28), he lies to the Intended at the end of the tale, allowing her to preserve an idealized image of her fiancé. In the process, he identifies himself with the very colonial 'pretence' he has previously exposed. The implication, perhaps, is that he too has

'contributed to the making of Kurtz' (p. 53). But this is to focus on Marlow; what of the Intended? It is left to the reader to decide whether she should have been told the truth. By lying, Marlow obviously spares her feelings, but is this a benevolent lie, an act of humanity and kindness, or is it condescending and demeaning? To resolve such cruxes demands choices that replicate Marlow's, implicating the reader in the production of meaning.

In this richly textured narrative, atmosphere is recreated and meaning emerges through a rich blend of stylistic techniques and devices. At times, the prose approximates to the condition of poetry to create tonal variations consistent with the presentation of a world both familiar and strange: 'The long stretches of the waterway ran on deserted into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side' (p. 36). Here, in the first sentence, the combination of open vowels in 'long', 'gloom' and 'on' is steadily overtaken by the proliferation of plosive 'd' sounds ('deserted … overshadowed, distances') and, aided by the polysyllabic final words, the initial invitation to expansiveness is checked. But the sustained sibilance in the next sentence immediately offers new aural possibilities, complementing the transition from shadow to sunlight and inviting an alternative perspective. Such subtle and dynamic variations, designed to mimic Marlow's attentiveness to navigating the river, produce literature that offers a sensory counterpart to experience.

Sustaining the narrative's tonal variations is a compelling sense of rhythm that operates in a number of ways – from the direct references to the changing of the tides during which the story is told to the interplay between levity and seriousness, for instance in the references to the dead donkeys and the 'less valuable animals' (p. 36) of the Eldorado Expedition. Other such local, microstructural variations include the balance of concrete details (such as rivets or dead hippo) and abstractions (such as the brooding gloom or the heart of darkness), and a narrative that is anecdotal at one moment and philosophical at the next, now telling the story, now commenting upon it. This variability supports and sustains larger, structural modulation, including disrupted chronology and deferrals of closure. Marlow's difficulties in articulating his experiences are thus replicated and witnessed in prose that implicates the reader in its rhythms, balancing his obsession with, and his alienation from, his subject.

RACISM

WRITING ABOUT *Othello*, Ben Okri noted that 'If it did not begin as a play about race, then its history has made it one'.[1] *Heart of Darkness* has endured a similar fate. In February 1975, in a deliberately provocative lecture on *Heart of Darkness* delivered at the University of Massachusetts, the Nigerian novelist and critic Chinua Achebe accused Conrad of being a 'bloody racist'. (The charge was toned down to 'thoroughgoing racist' when the published version of the lecture was later collected in book form.) To Achebe, the novella, 'an offensive and deplorable book', reduces Africans 'to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind', and as such confirms 'the need … in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest'.[2] Of course, Achebe's attack on the novella is open to the countercharge of 'presentism', whereby the past is found wanting by today's standards, with a concomitant failure to appreciate just how thoroughly the text subverts colonial assumptions. Nonetheless, to contemporary readers, the narrative is likely to strike a jarring period note. Its attitudes to race and ethnicity relate the text to the broader context of colonialism from which it emerged: the publication of *Heart of Darkness* followed hard on the heels of celebrations to mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897, celebrations doubling as a 'Festival of the British Empire', as proposed by the colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain.

Set against the prevailing mood, however, *Heart of Darkness* offers a counter-narrative sympathetic to the plight of the Africans and serving as a criticism of European mores. By assaulting the confidence of Western morality, Marlow's perspective disturbs the foundations upon which colonial ideas of superiority rest. The result is a dialogic narrative composed of competing voices and attitudes, in which the European self is shown to be increasingly insecure in the face of cultural difference. Beneath overt depictions of colonial excess, tonal discrepancies produce a countervailing narrative. A single episode in the text will suffice to illustrate how finely ingrained is

[1] Ben Okri, *A Way of Being Free* (1997), p. 72.
[2] Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1967–87* (1989), pp. 12, 3.

this blending of discordant attitudes. While still at the Coastal Station, Marlow encounters a chain gang whose victims pass him 'without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages' (p. 16). The demonstrative pronoun 'that' insists upon the reader's familiarity – and culpability – while the phrase 'unhappy savages' contradictorily combines sympathetic judgement with what would now be considered a racist slur. Marlow's attention is then attracted by the overseer:

> 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 had a uniform jacket with one button off 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. (p. 16)

Here, the Africans in the chain gang are dehumanized, reduced to 'raw matter', as if in need of modification. By contrast, the African overseer has undergone this transformation and is now 'one of the reclaimed'. This caustic irony debunks colonial myths about European superiority: drawing upon the language of religious conversion, it suggests that the African is 'reclaimed' by becoming a slave-master. In the language of Marlow's aunt, this man has been weaned from his 'horrid ways' (p. 13), and the proof of this conversion is that he has adopted the horrid ways of the Europeans. That he performs his duties 'despondently' passes its own comment upon the value of his 'reclamation', and while his uniform identifies him with the colonial state and separates him from the Africans in his charge, attention to the missing button possibly serves as a racially motivated reminder of inferiority. But this, in turn, gives way to an increasingly sceptical view of racial ideology and, in the process, rejects the presumption that there are higher and lower races.

First, Marlow notes that, to the African overseer, 'white men … [look] so much alike at a distance'. This simple statement of fact reverses the usual 'colonial gaze': instead of viewing – and de-individuating – the Africans through European eyes, the tables are turned, and it is the Europeans who are seen through African eyes. Although the moment is fleeting, the gesture is radical, with the European now being disconcertingly 'othered'. Once assured of

Marlow's status, the African treats him to 'a large, white, rascally grin'. The central adjective in this sequence is precisely chosen: on the surface, it simply conjures up the image of a toothy grin – an impression that gains by the conjunction 'large, white' – but, given the racial context, it is difficult to escape the suspicion that his 'white' grin also identifies him with his European masters. In this reading, the adjectives 'white' and 'rascally' are paired, with the implication that they are mutually reinforcing, and the grin shared while leading a chain gang, 'his charge', is that of the 'rascally' Europeans by proxy. Marlow recognizes this appeal to collusion: first, hesitantly – perhaps somewhat reluctantly – through the intuition that '[he] seemed to take me into partnership'; but, in keeping with the testamentary and confessional commitment of his narrative, he acknowledges, with sarcasm directed at the very opinions that 'reclaimed' the overseer in the first place: 'I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings.' This is a brave admission here, because the narrative immediately moves to the notorious 'grove of death' sequence, where the colonial excess is at its most shockingly blatant and unforgivable. *Heart of Darkness* does not shy away from or attempt to disguise the ugly facts of racism. And to read it as only a racist text is to deliberately receive the novella in reduced and blinkered terms.

The sustained tension between mimetic racist discourse, on the one hand, and a critical attitude towards European supremacy, on the other, identifies this as a historically transitional text. Acutely of its moment and yet simultaneously capable of transcending it, *Heart of Darkness* exposed the limitations of colonial fiction and, in the process, paved the way for the revisionist, post-colonial novel. Like Marlow's fictional inability to reconcile himself with his cultural heritage in the wake of his African experience, what begins as a colonial narrative steadily turns into an interrogation of colonialism, leaving the European reader, if not Marlow's immediate audience, with unsettling questions to answer. This is deliberate. As Marlow says: 'for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced' (p. 39).

From the outset of his career, as demonstrated in *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), Conrad's colonial fictions countered the prevailing orthodoxy, established in works by J. M. Ballantyne, G. A. Henty, H. Rider Haggard and others, in which untried young European men prove themselves in exotic locations.

In Conrad's hands, these same settings were used to subvert Victorian colonial assumptions and idioms, becoming places of estrangement for the European. The very wilderness setting in *Heart of Darkness* resists and subverts narratorial perspective and management: instead of receding into the background, locale impinges upon foreground, untameable and overwhelming. In like manner, the cohesion of colonial narrative, composed of casual condescension and period racism, is threatened by Marlow's latent and subversive sympathies. For example, during the attack on the steamer he is profoundly affected by the death of his unnamed helmsman, this 'savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara', and yet who, in his dying look, exerts a lingering 'claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment'. Such is this claim of 'kinship' that not only does it realign Marlow's purpose – he remains uncertain whether Kurtz, the object of his quest, 'was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him' (p. 54) – but it also destabilizes the narration.

The account of the helmsman's death is interrupted by an analepsis, during which Marlow introduces Kurtz's history. First, Marlow suspends his narration in response to an interjection by his audience aboard the *Nellie*; then, when he recommences, instead of continuing with the account of the helmsman, he struggles to regain focus in a paragraph that, while directed towards Kurtz, tapers off into confusion and suggestiveness, leading to another pause:

> "And I heard – him – it – this voice – other voices – all of them were so little more than voices – and the memory of this time itself lingers around me impalpable like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage or simply mean, without any kind of sense. Voices, voices – even the girl herself – now . . ."
>
> He was silent for a long time. (p. 51)

Following this interruption, chronology is disrupted: Marlow provides sketchy details about the 'original' Kurtz's past – and how '[a]ll Europe contributed to … [his] making' (p. 53) – suggests how Kurtz's obsessions made him the slave of 'many powers of darkness' (p. 52); then leaps forward to summarize his impressions of 'the shade of Mr Kurtz' (p. 53) and how he has 'the care of his memory'. Only then does Marlow return to the narrative present and the tale of 'my late helmsman' (p. 54). On one level, this structural arrangement associates Kurtz with the helmsman's death by juxtaposition. The fact that it is Marlow's sympathy for his African crewman that initiates the disruption to narrative order, however, gestures towards

a broader disturbance to the grand narrative of colonialism and its underpinning racial assumptions. *Heart of Darkness* is a fable of disenchantment and unease whose legacy has been to create a climate of scepticism within which to question easy assumptions about race and racial superiority.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

CONRAD COMPOSED *Heart of Darkness* specifically for publication in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, known familiarly as 'Maga', a leading periodical – and a period – he recalled with fondness: 'One was in decent company there and had a good sort of public. There isn't a single club and messroom and man-of-war in the British Seas and Dominions which hasn't its copy of Maga – not to speak of all the Scots in all parts of the world.'[1] Described as 'a conservative, traditionalist magazine that liked to give its readers good fare in masculine story-telling',[2] *Blackwood's* assured Conrad of a first audience that was broadly upper middle class and professional, conservative in politics and supportive of Empire. When the novella was published in book form three years later in *Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories*, reviewers noted its complexities and presciently predicted that Conrad would be read by a limited coterie: as the *Manchester Guardian* reviewer put it, 'It would be useless to pretend that [these stories] … can be very widely read' (10 December 1902, p. 3)[3] – but more astute readers also recognized its subversive nature.

Among these was Hugh Clifford, a colonial administrator and writer, who saw in this 'sombre study of the Congo' that, 'while the inefficiency of certain types of European "administrators" is mercilessly gibbeted, the power of the wilderness, of contact with barbarism and elemental men and facts, to effect the demoralisation of the white man is conveyed with marvellous force'; and he went on to note:

> The denationalisation of the European, the 'going Fantee' of civilised man, has been treated often enough in fiction … but never has the 'why of it' been

[1] *Letters*, IV, 506. [2] Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad* (1960), p. 281.
[3] Although Conrad's genius was quickly recognized by fellow writers, he did not achieve the commercial success that comes with popular recognition until the publication of *Chance* in 1913.

appreciated by any author as Mr. Conrad here appreciates it, and never, beyond all question, has any writer till now succeeded in bringing the reason, and the ghastly unreason, of it all home to sheltered folk as does Mr. Conrad in this wonderful, this magnificent, this terrible study.[1]

Edward Garnett, in the review already cited above, described the novella as 'the high-water mark of the author's talent', and claimed:

[T]he art of 'Heart of Darkness' implies the catching of infinite shades of the white man's uneasy, disconcerted, and fantastic relations with the exploited barbarism of Africa … The weirdness, the brilliance, the psychological truth of this masterly analysis of two Continents in conflict, of the abysmal gulf between the white man's system and the black man's comprehension of its results, is conveyed in a rapidly rushing narrative which calls for close attention on the reader's part.[2]

Conrad acknowledged the decisive influence of Garnett's judgement upon contemporary opinion, saying pointedly, 'The ruck takes its tone from you.'[3] As these two reviews demonstrate, the focus of initial critical attention was upon Kurtz, as illustrative of a wayward and degenerate colonialism.

Unsurprisingly, early reviewers were struck by Conrad's style: 'Phrases strike the mind like lines of verse,' commented one; Conrad 'uses the tools of his craft with the fine thoughtful delicacy of a mediaeval clockmaker,' wrote another.[4] But Conrad's method also had its detractors, among them John Masefield, who described *Heart of Darkness* as 'a cobweb abounding in gold threads. It gives one a curious impression of remoteness and aloofness from its subject'.[5] Other fellow writers had no such qualms: 'Read Conrad's new book,' urged George Gissing, 'He is the strongest writer – in every sense of the word – at present publishing in English … other men are mere scribblers in comparison'; while John Galsworthy, in a review article in 1908, predicted that Conrad's would be 'the only writing of the last twelve years that will enrich the English language to any great extent'.[6]

[1] *Spectator*, 29 November 1902, p. 828.
[2] [Unsigned review], *Academy and Literature*, 6 December 1902, p. 606.
[3] *Letters*, II, 468.
[4] *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1902, p. 3; *Athenæum*, 20 December 1902, p. 824.
[5] *Speaker*, 31 January 1903, p. 442.
[6] George Gissing to Miss Collet, 24 December 1902 (*Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family* (1927), p. 391); John Galsworthy, 'Joseph Conrad: A Disquisition', *Fortnightly Review* (April 1908), 630.

Conrad died in 1924 and, in a 1936 review, the novelist Elizabeth Bowen began: 'For the moment – a moment in literary consciousness being something at once immediate and extensive – Conrad is in abeyance. We are not clear yet how to rank him; there is an uncertain pause.'[1] The uncertainty would not last long. In 1948 the Cambridge-based critic F. R. Leavis described 'the great tradition' of the English novel as being composed of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Conrad. In his discussion of *Heart of Darkness*, Leavis praised Conrad's 'art of vivid essential record', but proceeded to argue that the writer's repeated recourse to abstract terms – '"inscrutable", "inconceivable", "unspeakable" and that kind of word' – was a weakness, and that the effect of such 'adjectival insistence' was, ultimately, 'not to magnify but rather to muffle'.[2] Since Leavis, the novella has garnered more critical attention than any other Conrad text, with vast claims being made for its cultural importance. In 1958, Albert J. Guerard called it 'a *Pilgrim's Progress* for our pessimistic and psychologizing age'.[3] This ever-expanding body of criticism has come to reflect and represent the trends and developments in the history of critical appreciation across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

In the 1950s, thanks to American critics such as Morton D. Zabel, Thomas Moser and Guerard, new critical perspectives shifted the focus of *Heart of Darkness* from Kurtz to Marlow. Moser's influential *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (1957) argued that Conrad's powers were at their peak between 1898 and 1911, declining thereafter as he became increasingly preoccupied with the 'uncongenial subject' of love and sexually charged relationships. But Moser's book anticipated the multidimensional nature of studies that have ensured Conrad's reputation by identifying the protean nature of the author of *Heart of Darkness*, including Conrad the moralist, Conrad the psychologist, Conrad the political commentator and Conrad the artist (p. 38). Within two decades, each of these areas would receive intensive study

[1] Review of Edward Crankshaw's *Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel* (1936), *Spectator*, 24 April 1936, p. 758.
[2] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (1948), pp. 175, 177. E. M. Forster had made a similar point in his review of *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921), claiming that Conrad 'is misty in the middle as well as the edges, that the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel' (*Abinger Harvest* (1936), p. 135).
[3] Albert J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist* (1958), p. 33.

and expansion, in works such as: *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (1963), by Eloise Knapp Hay; *Mimesis and Metaphor: An Inquiry into the Genesis and Scope of Conrad's Symbolic Imagery* (1967), by Donald C. Yelton; *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist* (1968), by Paul Kirschner; and *Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness* (1979), by Jeremy Hawthorn. To these may be added John A. Palmer's *Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth* (1968), which challenged Moser's 'achievement-and-decline' thesis. Arguing that Conrad's aesthetic development and experiment were sustained across his career, Palmer's study served to spark off a wave of revisionist criticism.

Announcing the psychoanalytic form of his approach, Guerard's discussion of *Heart of Darkness* occurs in a chapter entitled 'The Journey Within'. Here, Marlow's odyssey emerged as a 'symbolic descent into the unconscious' (p. 48), a Jungian 'night journey', involving him in a confrontation with his own dark nature as he finally recognizes Kurtz as his 'potential and fallen self' (p. 38). One consequence of this approach was to turn on its head Leavis's claim about obscurity, with Guerard arguing, on grounds 'at once literary and psychological', that a 'confrontation with such a double and facet of the unconscious cannot be reported through realistic dialogue' (p. 42). Freudian critics would go on to analyse Marlow's journey as a voyage into libidinal mysteries and the discovery of the Id. As C. B. Cox summarized it: 'Marlow penetrates down a narrow channel to find in the darkness an orgiastic experience.'[1]

As Conrad criticism flourished, *Heart of Darkness* received – and continues to receive – the lion's share of attention. For instance, in *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile* (1960), Leo Gurko examined its formal symmetries to argue that Marlow's lie to the Intended refashions the lie about imperialism. A decade later, Bruce Johnson's *Conrad's Models of Mind* (1971) located the tale within a philosophical tradition including Arthur Schopenhauer and Jean-Paul Sartre, with Conrad regarded as presenting the meaninglessness of experience in terms of a confrontation with existential absurdism. Earlier literary traditions provided another context, as when David Thorburn's *Conrad's*

[1] *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes, A Casebook*, ed. C. B. Cox (1981), p. 17.

Romanticism (1974) argued that Marlow's struggles to articulate his experience replicate those of Wordsworth. The novella influenced Conrad biography, too, and where an earlier generation of interpreters had used the writer's life to explain his work, Frederick R. Karl used the work to explain the life, arguing in *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (1979) that the 'seeming disparity between Marlow's moderation and Kurtz's anarchy' repeats divisions that 'Conrad sensed within himself' (p. 488). In his masterful study *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (1979), Ian Watt generously located each of Conrad's early works within a host of contexts, revealing how these had shaped the author's art. In the process, Watt distilled the previous two decades of Conrad criticism. His chapter on *Heart of Darkness* relates the novella to its biographical sources before expanding its contextual frame of reference to include the *fin de siècle*, symbolism and Impressionism, the Victorian work ethic and religion of progress, ideologies of imperialism and evolutionary thought.

In the wake of the 'structuralist revolution' in universities in the 1960s and 1970s, literary criticism was increasingly theory-driven, as texts were subject to a variety of non-intrinsic political, social and cultural interpretive approaches. Since then, *Heart of Darkness* has been read through the lenses of various 'isms', including Marxism, feminism and post-colonialism. In very broad terms, Marxist theory views human life as determined by its relationship to the means of economic production, and history as a class struggle inspired by competition for economic, social and political advantage. To read literature in this light is to interrogate the underlying political substratum of the text. For instance, in *The Mythology of Imperialism* (1971), Jonah Raskin identifies the subject of *Heart of Darkness* as the decay of European civilization and Kurtz as the symbol of Western man, capitalism incarnate. The title of Fredric Jameson's influential book, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), succinctly sets out the parameters and guiding terms of the approach.

Steve Smith begins his Marxist reading of *Heart of Darkness* by noting a contradiction: the colonial exploitation that Marlow encounters in Africa is only such within the context of humanism, the very ideology employed to justify the venture. Marlow's awareness of the workings of the colonial economy, whereby 'rubbishy' trade goods are exchanged for 'a precious trickle of ivory', leads Smith to argue that the narration

'foregrounds that revealing incongruity between rhetoric and the reality of colonialism'. To Smith, Marlow's disorientation in the Congo mirrors his status as a displaced ocean-going seafarer, and, in consequence, 'Marlow can thus be considered in relation to a whole mode of production that predates the frenzied penetration of the African continent and which is now threatened, or profoundly transformed by its arrival'.[1] In the text, one mode of production and its attendant technologies and ideology is overlaid on another, older one, encouraging a critique of the colonial system, while the narrative is characterized by an implicit unease about the assumptions on which the colonial exploitation is founded. According to Smith, this 'unease' is manifest in the narrative itself rather than in Marlow, whose destruction of the postscript to Kurtz's report, in particular, renders him antagonistic to the unpalatable realities of history and politics.

In their subject matter, Conrad's fictions, typically, address concerns thought to be the preserve of men rather than women. His tales of seafaring, colonialism and politics seemed to confirm and perpetuate the gender bias of his age, and so it was timely when, invigorated by the women's movement of the 1960s, feminist criticism turned its attention to them. Questioning the inherited assumptions of patriarchy that underpin the presentation of women, feminist readings attend closely to narrative strategies that disempower women in order to expose and challenge the manner in which they are defined, invariably as 'Other', 'absence' or part of 'nature'. For example, Nina Pelikan Straus finds the novella's artistic conventions 'brutally sexist' and sees Marlow's narrative as aimed at a male 'reader–participator': 'these words are understood differently by feminist readers and by mainstream male commentators'. In Straus's reading, Marlow's lie to the Intended excludes both her and woman readers unless they are 'willing to suspend their womanliness far enough to forever dissociate themselves from the women characters'.[2] To Johanna M. Smith, Marlow fuses patriarchy and imperialism in his description of Kurtz's African mistress as an embodiment of the jungle:

[1] Steve Smith, 'Marxism and Ideology: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*', *Literary Theory at Work*, ed. Douglas Tallack (1987), pp. 187, 189.
[2] Nina Pelikan Straus, 'The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Novel*, 20 (1987), 125, 127.

As the patriarchal ideology intends with its power of image-making to distance and hence conquer the woman's body, so the imperialist ideology intends with its power for good to distance the mysterious life of the jungle. And both the savage woman and the jungle are momentarily silenced by Marlow's images of them. As these images interrupt the movement of the narrative, however, they create gaps by which the reader can see the impossibility of such ideological containment.[1]

Among those who defended Conrad's representation of women is Ruth L. Nadelhaft who, in the first book-length study of his works from a feminist perspective, asserted that, 'Through narrative strategies, female characterisations, and reference to his own marginal status, Conrad found means to express in works prized by patriarchal culture a consistent and profound criticism of that very culture.'[2]

But the contemporary approach that has had the most profound impact upon the reception of *Heart of Darkness* has been post-colonialism. This theory exposes the Eurocentric premises of Western texts, whereby Europe and European cultural assumptions are accepted as normal, natural and universal in order to emphasize the inherent politics of representation at work. In particular, texts set in what was colonial space are examined to reveal the strategies of disenfranchisement by which the non-European is reductively cast as a character in someone else's story – that told by the colonizer. Denied his or her own voice or story, the colonized subject is divested of a cultural heritage. Employing comparable methods of subjugation, patriarchy, racism and sexism are often conflated to reveal colonialism as a hyper-masculine construct that subordinates not just persons of another colour but also women. With much of it set in the non-European world, Conrad's writing – and *Heart of Darkness* in particular – has famously attracted a post-colonial controversy that still reverberates in the present.

The significant moment arrived with the publication in 1977 of the previously mentioned polemic by Chinua Achebe. This attack on 'Conrad the racist' and upon his tale as trading in 'offensive' stereotypes about Africa and Africans has probably provoked more critical debate than any other single piece of Conrad criticism, and Achebe

[1] Johanna M. Smith, 'Too Beautiful Altogether: Patriarchal Ideology in *Heart of Darkness*', in *Joseph Conrad 'Heart of Darkness': A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (1989), p. 186.
[2] Ruth L. Nadelhaft, *Joseph Conrad* (1991), p. 12.

has been supported or censured by European and non-European critics alike. For example, to the Ugandan writer Peter Nazareth, the narrative demonstrates the erosion of Marlow's 'inherited racist framework through the direct experience of Africa, through reflection on that experience, and through the telling of the story'. He concludes that Achebe's hostility is itself symptomatic of a post-colonial attitude: 'the explanation is that once Conrad helped colonials break out, some of them looked back and found him unnecessary'.[1] More recent studies include Peter Edgerly Firchow's *Envisioning Africa: Racism and Imperialism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'* (2000), a work that, by highlighting discrepancies between late-Victorian and contemporary usages of such terms as 'race', 'racism' and 'imperialism', reveals how the blithely unthinking equation of these terms results in distortions and misinterpretation. Ironically, while Achebe's critique has stimulated interest in the racial themes in the text, it has also served to add a strain of notoriety to the novella's reception, and this, along with the self-evident literary merit of this most fascinating of tales, ensures that *Heart of Darkness*, in his own negative judgement, 'plagues us still'.

Such has been the interest in *Heart of Darkness* in academia that the novella has taken on a life of its own, separate from the body of Conrad's work. Where it was initially published as part of a collection of three stories, it is now more likely to be found in one volume on its own, but directing the reader outwards to wide-ranging studies, led by Cedric Watts's *Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness': A Critical and Contextual Discussion* (1977), and a host of guides, casebooks, study aids, commentaries and websites.[2] The 'sociologizing' of the text in literary studies shows no sign of abating. For example, while Marxist theory may be less popular now, its methods have influenced more recent ideological approaches, including New Historicism, which, by juxtaposing a literary text with a contemporary non-literary text, seeks to bring history into dialogue with literature by relating the work to the period of its composition. Another current approach is Eco-Criticism, which foregrounds the environment and environmental concerns in the text. Applied to the novella, it raises questions such as: What is the

[1] Peter Nazareth, 'Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers', *Conradiana*, 14 (1983), 177, 182.
[2] For a selection of these studies, see Select Bibliography below.

impact of the European's 'fantastic invasion' (p. 24) upon Africa?; What comment does this pass upon the tale?; and, What is the consequence of presenting the elephant as an 'absence' in the novella? What Jonah Raskin in 1967 called 'the *Heart of Darkness* "craze"' is with us still.[1] Each decade brings new and inventive interpretive approaches to bear upon the novella, and each yields fresh insights into a text whose capacity to withstand such interrogation and still retain its mysteries is part of its enduring appeal.

[1] Jonah Raskin, 'Imperialism: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2 (1967), 113.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

THIS EDITION OFFERS the reader a new and different version of a classic of Modernist fiction. Although not a critical edition, it incorporates the carefully curated text of *Heart of Darkness* previously published in the *Youth* volume in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad.[1] Whereas almost all other editions use as their copy-text a printed version of the story (usually the first English edition of 1902), the present one is based on Conrad's own pre-print documents and committed to recovering the writer's own preferred forms; and, concomitantly, to a text largely unencumbered by house styles and successive layers of editorial interference. It also rescues many words not found in print before and, through its restoration of Conrad's own expressive punctuation, attempts to recover the authentic inflexions of his most famous narrator.

*

Composition of what was originally titled 'The Heart of Darkness' took place during the period from mid-December 1898 to early February 1899 for publication in the 1,000th issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Surviving pre-print documents from this period form the basis of a composite copy-text for the present edition: a 34-page portion of revised typescript prepared by Conrad's wife Jessie (Berg Collection, New York Public Library) for the opening phase of the story;[2] and a nearly complete authorial manuscript (138 leaves, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University) for the remainder.

The novella was first published in Britain as a three-part serial in *Blackwood's* during the period February–April 1899. Heavily repunctuating some of Conrad's most vivid prose and dressed in the livery of

[1] *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether*, ed. Owen Knowles (2010).
[2] The typescript finished with the words 'suggestive and' (21.9). In the present 'Note', all quotations from the story are identified by page-and-line numbers.

the Blackwood house style,[1] this first version established the basic print form for all subsequent editions in Britain. The uncorrected typescript of the story prepared for the British serial also provided the basis for its first American serialization in eight instalments in *The Living Age*, June–August 1900.

Incorporating a further round of authorial revision, Conrad's celebrated story first appeared in book form in Britain along with 'Youth' and 'The End of the Tether' in *Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories* published by William Blackwood on 13 November 1902, followed a few months later by the first American edition published by McClure, Phillips on 25 February 1903. In both editions and thereafter, the story appeared without the definite article in its title – as simply *Heart of Darkness*.

Typeset from an impression of the first English edition of the *Youth* volume, the second English edition appeared under the imprint of J. M. Dent in early September 1917, with a specially commissioned 'Author's Note' and including a few small corrections by the author.[2] This edition was, in turn, used to set up the 'limited' collected editions of Conrad's works brought out in early 1921 by William Heinemann in Britain and by Doubleday, Page and Company in their 'Sun-Dial' edition in America.

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The use of Conrad's pre-print documents as a copy-text has a number of consequences for the story's form and texture that should be made clear to the reader. Notably, the novella is presented here in the form it takes in those early documents: that is, as a single continuous narration rather than as the formally numbered three-part narrative imposed by the circumstances of serial printing and then followed in all book editions. This change has a powerfully cumulative force: it deepens the reader's immersion in the story's hallucinatory, dream-like quality and restores the singleness of impact – 'the development of *one* situation, only *one* really from beginning to end' (*Letters*, II, 282) – that Conrad habitually sought; now offered no respite from the

[1] For a discussion of Blackwood house-style protocols, see Owen Knowles and J. H. Stape, 'The Rationale of Punctuation in Conrad's *Blackwood's* Fictions', *The Conradian*, 30.1 (2005), 1–45.

[2] For the text of the 'Author's Note', see Appendix D. The marked proofs of this 1917 edition are held at the Everett Case Library, Colgate University.

relentless nature of Marlow's nightmare, we are pressed into ever-closer alignment with the listeners aboard the *Nellie*, whose only momentary relief arrives through the narrator's own agitated pauses.

The simplicity of means found in the pre-print documents also explains another formal feature adopted here. The present text dispenses with a print convention first introduced in the *Blackwood's* serial and repeated in all later editions – that is, the provision of quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph as a way of signalling that the narrative is a continuously oral one, and of distinguishing the main narrator from other speakers. In the case of some Conrad works, where a monologue is continually interrupted by other voices, such a convention can be an indisputable aid to clarity. But it is less necessary in *Heart of Darkness*, where its appearance seems largely a mechanical offshoot of house styling. This edition restores Conrad's own simpler scheme for signalling where Marlow's monologue begins and ends, and where an anonymous narrator replaces him.

As with an archaeological project, editorial work often involves a return to the earliest material evidence in order to uncover, sift, reject or restore. In the case of *Heart of Darkness*, a collation of earliest documents with all printed editions appearing during Conrad's lifetime yields unexpectedly rich findings. Notably, it has allowed for the restoration in this edition of numerous substantives from the original documents judged to have been lost through error or mischance and, therefore, missing from all previous editions. Occasionally, the errors or slips were of Conrad's making, the result of over-hasty manuscript revision or careless deletion; others were produced during editing and typesetting; but the majority were the product of typing errors or arose through the typist's understandable difficulty in reading Conrad's cramped handwriting. The following list includes a selection of the restorations in this edition not seen before in print, with the new readings enclosed in square brackets followed by their commonly accepted print forms:

5.28 an effective] a direct
14.30 shiny] slimy
16.9 thick shade] shady spot
18.1 strangeness] surroundings
19.19 tent] hut
26.17 so sociable] sociable
26.23 became also] became
31.36 empty hulk] hulk

32.35 bowels] life
33.35 jerked out] jerked
37.2 bump] thump
43.16 said nodding] said
43.20 looked out steadily] looked out
44.9 half cooked cold] half-cooked
45.14 serious, very serious] very serious
47.19 just in] in
48.5 splashy] splashing
48.12 beastly heavy] heavy
48.26 opened fire] opened
54.4 no annoying] no
56.10 thin] slim
57.19 talk] take
64.20 again steadily] again
66.7 in though] in
71.40 fiery] fierce
73.16 Intended, my ivory] Intended
73.27 hand] you
74.20 lying here] lying
76.27 not very] not
77.34 broad black] broad

Many other manuscript readings appearing here for the first time are slight in form but powerful in substantive force: for example, several newly capitalized forms serve to add another level of menacing abstraction, as when Kurtz is twice referred to as a 'Shadow' (64.31, 69.20), or the jungle as a vast 'Nowhere' (40.35,53.16) and a threatening 'Unknown' (37.14); elsewhere, the restoration of italics lost during typing (as in Marlow's 'I think Mr Kurtz *is* a remarkable man' (66.39–40)) can serve to add truly revelatory emphases. Also preserved are unusual or archaic spellings that were still current in the 1890s: 'by and bye' (6.21), 'calipers' (12.2), 'dumfounded' (24.7), 'deviltry' (44.39), 'Anyways' (25.35), 'lounged' (49.22), 'musn't' (51.6) and 'leggins' (65.14).

Still more numerous and cumulatively important are the restorations of manuscript readings lost or altered largely as a result of editorial interventions during the preparation of the *Blackwood's* serial. These interventions, many of which enact the protocols of house styling, range from tinkering with definite and indefinite articles to the conversion of singular into plural forms and vice versa, and include small changes made to ensure 'correct' case and tense forms; alterations to Conrad's supposedly muddled or awkward syntax (the 'correction' of which often involved an Englishing of his Gallicisms); frequent changes to his use of the determiners 'these/those'; and conversions of an informal and colloquial register to a more formal and genteel one (for

example, 'ripped the bowels out' (36.22) was emended to 'ripped the life out', and 'you got to clear out' (58.15) to 'you've got to clear out').

A new spareness of form and texture in the present edition arises from its greater fidelity to the punctuation of the pre-print documents, a form of punctuation that – especially in the manuscript – is characteristically lighter and more unorthodox than would be required by present-day custom and certainly by the stricter standards of the late-Victorian print culture. Here, we have generally accepted authorial usages and not imposed excessive emendation in the name of 'correctness'. Or to put it another way, we have resisted the kind of extensive and inordinately heavy repunctuation accompanying the story's printing as a *Blackwood's* serial. Statistics may not always be helpful, but one or two can throw a revealing light. In the extant portion of *Heart of Darkness* typescript, Conrad added some 200 items of punctuation during revision, a relatively light layer. The corresponding portion of the printed serial witnesses to a further addition of roughly 700 accidentals by the Blackwood's editors.[1] Were this number to have been replicated in the remainder of the serial, the total would amount to several thousands.[2] This repunctuation also invariably involved a change to the kind and quality of the original pointing. Editorial interventions were generally devoted to securing – sometimes overfussily – a 'correct' and standardized syntactical punctuation appropriate to the magazine's literate, middle- to upper-class audience and their acquired reading habits. By contrast, the evidence of Conrad's pre-print documents is that the invention of Marlow brought with it the need for a version of what present-day linguists call an 'elocutionary' punctuation[3] – in this case, a set of markers appropriate to the created illusion of an *oral* delivery made up of a host of varied cadences, intonations, inflexions, hesitations and pauses that will be 'heard' by both dramatized listeners (on the *Nellie*) and a wider audience of implied listeners. As this edition indicates, the punctuation devised for Marlow's extended monologue can be unorthodox in

[1] These figures are supplied by Marion Michael and Wilkes Berry, 'The Typescript of *Heart of Darkness*', *Conradiana*, 12 (1980), 145.

[2] As a representative example, one short and relatively uncomplicated manuscript sentence (26.30–32 in the present edition) with no internal punctuation appeared in the serial with four additional commas: 'Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch.'

[3] See Peter Elbow, *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* (2012).

form and unusual in the richness of its paralinguistic nuances: the use of ellipses of varying lengths to distinguish hesitation from pause, and pause from lengthy silence; repetitions; speech bursts; en-dashes and em-dashes in order to create an effect of excited oral momentum; and a feature described by Conrad as 'the typographical trick of broken phrases' (*Letters*, II, 340) as a way of dramatizing heightened inarticulacy. Such pointing has a performative function in the sense that (like a stage direction or actor's gesture) its markers invite the listener to attend closely to the emotional logic underlying spoken words: what is said often proves less important than what is left unsaid or the way in which something is said.

Even the very smallest example of editorial tinkering with Conrad's expressive prose can serve to highlight the larger differences between two models of punctuation:

Manuscript:	'Of course you must take care of the motives. Right motives – always.'[1]
Blackwood's:	'Of course you must take care of the motives – right motives – always.'

Part of his final deranged confession, Kurtz's utterance in its manuscript form is appropriately broken into 'fragments shored against … [his] ruin'. If his words here initially promise a vestigial moral reaction, this promise is quickly dissipated: the sharp movement into brusque speech fragments suggests a speaker who 'takes care' of his own motives by echoing the bland slogans of the company's propaganda. That the syntax also resembles an imperious command ('Right motives – always') enforces the impression of an individual hopelessly trapped within the illusion of his own omnipotence. By contrast, the *Blackwood's* version typically prefers 'correctness' by converting broken syntax into a single sentence and making an interpolation of what was a qualifying afterthought. But, in doing so, it alters tone and dilutes impact, now suggesting a speaker capable of making nice discriminations and even one feelingly committed to the 'right motives'. As can be seen here, even the slightest repunctuation of Conrad's expressive prose can have important (and sometimes negative) consequences for its meanings.

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[1] See 73.29 in the present edition.

The choice of pre-print documents as a copy-text here necessarily entails substantial emendation, the most important being the inclusion of revisions and corrections made by Conrad for the story's serialization in *Blackwood's* and the first English edition.[1]

The numerous variants accepted in this edition from the *Blackwood's* serial represent the fruits of authorial revision undertaken during the typescript and proof stages in preparation for the story's first printing. These emendations are, of course, fewer in the story's first phase, for which the portion of revised typescript acts as a copy-text. In the case of the remainder, collation of manuscript and serial reveals the extensive correction and revision undertaken by Conrad in the now lost typescript and proofs. The only large-scale change needing to be adopted from the printed serial involves his total recasting of a long passage describing the traumatic effect of the jungle upon Marlow (38.23–39.11), a passage left unsettled in the manuscript. Otherwise the extensive corrections and revisions were largely made up of numerous smaller-scale verbal changes and the refinement of local effects, often involving single-word substitutions, deletions or additions. One of the most memorable of these took place at a late stage in the correction of serial proofs, where Kurtz's anguished cry, 'Oh! The Horror!' became 'The horror! The horror!' (74.31).

When revisiting the story some months later for the book edition, Conrad again worked on the text, although the resulting revisions were less scattered and different in kind. Whereas a large percentage of the changes made for the serial consisted of corrections and repairs – the elimination of repetitions and slips, the smoothing out of awkward syntax, and so on – those for the English first edition, mainly found in the story's final phase, involved a more detached sense of the need to temper passages of excited rhetoric, with Conrad carrying out significant pruning of the Harlequin's

[1] See Appendix B for a selection of the most significant of these corrections and revisions. A fully comprehensive list of substantive emendations can be found in the 'Apparatus: Emendation and Variation' section of the Cambridge Edition of *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether* (2010), pp. 339–67. The limited changes that can be assigned to Conrad in the 1917 and later editions of the story have not been adopted in the present edition.

narrative, the description of Kurtz's African mistress and the account of Kurtz's tormented demise.[1]

Two further types of emendation have been admitted into the copy-text. Manuscript readings provide the basis for correcting a variety of errors created by Jessie Conrad during her preparation of the typescript, some of which escaped Conrad's attention, with others prompting him to make revisions that he would not otherwise have made, and still more resulting in authorial 'corrections' made on terms created by the typist. These graphic and typing errors (most of which passed into print) suggest that Jessie Conrad became, in effect, an inadvertent collaborator in the text's production: for example, the ensign of the French warship, which had 'drooped limp' in the manuscript (14.29 in the present edition), 'dropped limp' in the typescript and subsequent printed texts. In all of these cases of uninvited 'collaboration' – and there are over thirty of them in the typescript – the manuscript form has been restored here. A second group of slips and errors in the manuscript itself, likely to have been caused by hasty or imperfect revision (but which have nevertheless passed into the printed texts), have also been emended for the first time.[2]

Inevitably, the combination of relatively light and sometimes inconsistent punctuation in the *Heart of Darkness* manuscript, compounded by the absence of intervening documents between it and the densely punctuated Blackwood's serial, can severely complicate the process of emending Conrad's accidentals. Nevertheless, certain forms of standardization can be applied, and some selective emendation to punctuation has been necessary in order to supply pointing overlooked during hasty composition, to repair outright errors, to resolve ambiguity or to carry out Conrad's preferences more consistently than he himself did during drafting.

A first group of emendations covers a range of manuscript slips and oversights, ranging from missing full stops, apostrophes and question marks, through missing commas in series of adjectives, nouns and

[1] For example, after the word 'simplicity' (79.4), Conrad cut from the serial Kurtz's words, '"I have lived – supremely!" "What do you want here? I have been dead – and damned." "Let me go – I want more of it." More of what? More blood, more heads on stakes, more adoration, rapine, and murder.'

[2] For example, 'set into' has been emended to 'set off into' (19.17); 'short noise' to 'shore noise' (39.29); 'back to' to 'back to dodge' (49.5–6); and 'felt like' to 'felt' (82.24).

verbs, to missing or inconsistent dialogue markers, all of which require predominantly mechanical solutions. In the case of dialogue markers, Conrad's punctuation is often either simply deficient or unconventional in being modelled on a French-based typography that places a dash before opening inverted commas and uses a similar dash to introduce different speakers in passages of interactive dialogue. If Conrad's idiosyncratic punctuation is regularized here, it is, by contrast, respected whenever matters of emphasis are involved. For example, the manuscript's 'Oh! these months' (24.32) is preferred to the serial's more conventional 'Oh, these months!' in order to respect a form of accentuation that Conrad consistently sought.[1]

In some of these examples, emendation completes patterns of punctuation partially begun but imperfectly sustained. Such is also the case with vocatives, appositives and clauses of all kinds that sometimes lack bracketing commas. Where these syntactical features are part of a complex sentence structure, commas have been added sparingly to set them off more clearly than in the manuscript. Conrad's additional pointing in his revised typescript (which serves as an invaluable form of style-sheet for the Conrad editor) provides a sanction for other kinds of conservative emendation and, in particular, indicates his preferred practice, not always followed in manuscripts, of setting off by commas such qualifying terms as 'However', 'Moreover', 'So', 'Still', 'Oh' and 'Well' at the beginning of sentences, and short interpolated phrases such as 'so to speak' (24.18).

The unorthodox nature of Conrad's punctuation means that in many cases emendations cannot be effected by applying mechanical principles, but need to be made on a case-by-case basis by attending to context and textual nuance. For instance, some manuscript sentences hover ambiguously between declarative statement and interrogative form and have, where the context allows, been clarified by an additional apostrophe[2] or question mark. Generally, where a lack of punctuation might cause significant confusion or ambiguity, it has been repaired (although not always in ways adopted by the Blackwood's

[1] The forms of Conrad's word-divisions are also respected, even when a slight inconsistency may be involved, as in 'steampipes' (37.30) and 'steam-pipes' (39.7).

[2] Decisions on this item of punctuation are complicated by the fact that the apostrophe key on Jessie Conrad's typewriter at this time had lost its vertical stroke and produced only a full-stop: hence many of the apostrophes in the manuscript were never transmitted through the typescripts to the printed versions.

editors). For example, the manuscript's 'he stood by civilly holding a half pint champagne bottle' leaves it uncertain whether 'civilly' qualifies the preceding 'stood by' or the subsequent 'holding'; while the serial chose the latter, adding a comma after 'by', the present edition emends by adding a comma after 'civilly' (26.35), on the grounds that in a cancelled manuscript passage Conrad had written, 'he stood by civilly candle in hand'. Where, on some occasions, Conrad's own punctuation creates ambiguity or has been rendered idiosyncratic by revisions not properly assimilated into the text, it has been similarly emended.

Finally, certain styling and typographical features in the text are subject to standardization. Three spaced points (. . .) signify dialogue suspended or subject to a pause, whereas long dashes (—) signal a sudden and unexpected interruption of dialogue; a standard-spaced three-point ellipsis represents an omission made by the editors. Despite some variable usage in the manuscript, punctuation closing off dialogue uniformly precedes the quotation marks. Superscript letters used in the original documents (for example, 'M^{r}') have been lowered; and non-English words are italicized, as are ships' names and titles of books and pamphlets.

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Broadview Press's '*Heart of Darkness*: Online Theory and Criticism', under the general editorship of John G. Peters (www.broadviewpress.com/heartofdarkness/), offers access to a wide range of critical, theoretical and historical texts relevant to Conrad's story.

CHRONOLOGY

[Publication dates given below are those of the English editions.]

1857	December 3	Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (Nałęcz coat-of-arms) born in Berdyczów, Russian-occupied Ukraine, to poet, playwright and translator Apollo Korzeniowski and Ewelina or 'Ewa' (née Bobrowska)
1862	May	Apollo Korzeniowski, his wife, and son are exiled to Vologda, Russia
1865	April	Ewa Korzeniowska dies of tuberculosis
1867		Conrad visits Odessa with his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski; perhaps his first view of the sea
1868		Korzeniowski permitted to leave Russia
1869	February	Korzeniowski and Conrad move to Cracow
	May	Korzeniowski dies
1870		Conrad, ward of Bobrowski, begins study with tutor, Adam Pulman
1873	May	Visits Switzerland and northern Italy
1874	October	Takes position in Marseille with Delestang et Fils, wholesalers and shippers
1875		Apprentice in *Mont-Blanc* (to Caribbean)
1876–7		In *Saint-Antoine* (to Caribbean)
1878	late February or early March	In Marseille, unsuccessfully attempts suicide by shooting himself in the chest
	April	Leaves Marseille in British steamer *Mavis* (Mediterranean waters)

	June	Lands at Lowestoft, Suffolk; first time in England
	July–September	Sails as ordinary seaman in *Skimmer of the Sea* (North Sea)
	December 3	21st birthday
1878–80		In *Duke of Sutherland* (to Sydney), *Europa* (Mediterranean waters)
1880		Meets G. F. W. Hope and Adolf Krieger
	June	Passes examination for second mate
1880–81		Third mate in *Loch Etive* (to Sydney)
1881–4		Second mate in *Palestine*, *Riversdale*, *Narcissus* (Eastern seas)
1884	December	Passes examination for first mate
1885		Following the Berlin Conference, the Congo Free State is established under the personal rule of Leopold II
1885–6		Second mate in *Tilkhurst* (to Singapore and India)
1886		Submits 'The Black Mate', perhaps his first story, to a *Tit-Bits* competition
	August	Becomes a British subject
	November	Passes examination for master and receives 'Certificate of Competency'
1886–7		Second mate in *Falconhurst* (British waters)
1887–8		First mate in *Highland Forest*, *Vidar* (Eastern seas)
1888–9		Captain of barque *Otago* (Australia and Mauritius)
1889	autumn	Living in Pimlico (London), begins *Almayer's Folly*
	October	Interviewed in Brussels with a view to securing a posting to the Congo
1890	February–April	In Poland for first time since 1874
	May 10	Leaves Bordeaux to take up a position with the Belgian company Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo

	June 12	Disembarks at Boma, seat of government for the Congo
	June 13	Travels to Matadi; begins 'The Congo Diary'; meets Roger Casement
	June 28	Begins overland trek to Kinshasa
	August 2	Arrives in Kinshasa and the next day departs in the *Roi des Belges* for Stanley Falls; begins the 'Up-river Book'
	September 2	Reaches Stanley Falls
	November 10	Returns to Matadi and obtains a release from his contract on medical grounds
	December 4	Departs for Europe
1891	February–March	Recuperating from his African ordeal in the German Hospital, London
	summer	Manages warehouse of Barr, Moering in London
1891–3		First mate in *Torrens* (London and Plymouth to Adelaide)
1893		Meets John Galsworthy and Edward L. ('Ted') Sanderson (passengers on *Torrens*)
	autumn	Visits Bobrowski in Ukraine
	November	Signs on as second mate in *Adowa*, which sails only to Rouen and back
1894	January	Ends career as seaman
	February	Bobrowski dies
	autumn	Meets Edward Garnett and Jessie George, his future wife
1895	April	*Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* published. Korzeniowski adopts 'Joseph Conrad' as his pen name
1896	March	*An Outcast of the Islands*. Marries Jessie George; six-month honeymoon in Brittany
	July	Completes a draft of 'An Outpost of Progress', his first African story
	September	Settles in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex

1897		Begins friendship with socialist and writer R. B. Cunninghame Graham; meets Henry James and American novelist Stephen Crane
	December	*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*
1898		Meets Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford, his future collaborator, and H. G. Wells
	January	First son (Alfred Borys Leo) born
	April	*Tales of Unrest*
	October	Moves to Pent Farm, Postling, Kent, sublet from Ford
	mid-December	Begins a story then titled 'The Heart of Darkness'
1899	January 9	Sends first batch of 12,000 words, foreseeing a story of two serial instalments
	February	Serialization of 'The Heart of Darkness' begins in *Blackwood's* 1,000th number
	February 6	Completes 'The Heart of Darkness', informing Blackwood that three serial instalments may be needed
	April	Serialization of the African story ends
1900	September	Begins association with literary agent J. B. Pinker
	October	*Lord Jim*
1901	January	Death of Queen Victoria
	June	*The Inheritors* (with Ford)
1902	November 13	*Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories* published in Edinburgh and London
1903	February 25	*Youth* volume published by McClure, Phillips in America
	April	*Typhoon and Other Stories*
	October	*Romance* (with Ford)
1904	October	*Nostromo*
1905	June	*One Day More* staged in London
1906		Meets Arthur Marwood, a future close friend

	August 2	Second son (John Alexander) born
	October	*The Mirror of the Sea*
1907		*The Secret Agent* (September). Moves to Someries, Luton, Bedfordshire
1908	August	*A Set of Six*
1909		Moves to rented rooms in Aldington, Kent
1910		Suffers a severe mental and physical breakdown extending into the summer; the Conrads move to Capel House, Orlestone, Kent; awarded a Civil List Pension of £100 annually
1911	October	*Under Western Eyes*
1912	January	*Some Reminiscences* (later known by the title of the American edition, *A Personal Record*)
	October	*'Twixt Land and Sea*
	December	First meets journalist Richard Curle, his future literary executor and biographer
1913	September	*Chance*, with 'main' publication date of January 1914. Becomes friendly with the philosopher Bertrand Russell
1914	July–November	Visits Austrian Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War; returns home via Vienna and Genoa
1915	February	*Within the Tides*
	September	*Victory*
1917	March	*The Shadow-Line*
	June	Relinquishes Civil List Pension
	September	Second English edition of the *Youth* volume published by J. M. Dent, with first appearance of 'Author's Note'
1918	January	Meets novelist Hugh Walpole
	November 11	Armistice Day; Conrad's son Borys is hospitalized, suffering from shellshock and gas poisoning

1919	March	Moves to Spring Grove, near Wye, Kent; dramatic version of *Victory* opens in London
	August	*The Arrow of Gold*
	October	Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent
1920	June	*The Rescue*
1921	January–April	Visits Corsica with his wife for an extended holiday; Collected Editions begin publication in England (Heinemann) and in America (Doubleday)
	February	*Notes on Life and Letters*
1922	February	Death of J. B. Pinker
	November	Dramatic version of *The Secret Agent* staged in London
1923	May–June	Visits America on a publicity tour as a guest of his publisher, F. N. Doubleday
	December	*The Rover*
1924	May	Declines offer of a knighthood
	August 3	Dies at Oswalds
	August 7	Roman Catholic funeral and burial, Canterbury
	September	*The Nature of a Crime* (with Ford)
	October	*The Shorter Tales*
1925	January	*Tales of Hearsay*
	September	*Suspense*
1926	March	*Last Essays*
1928	June	*The Sisters*

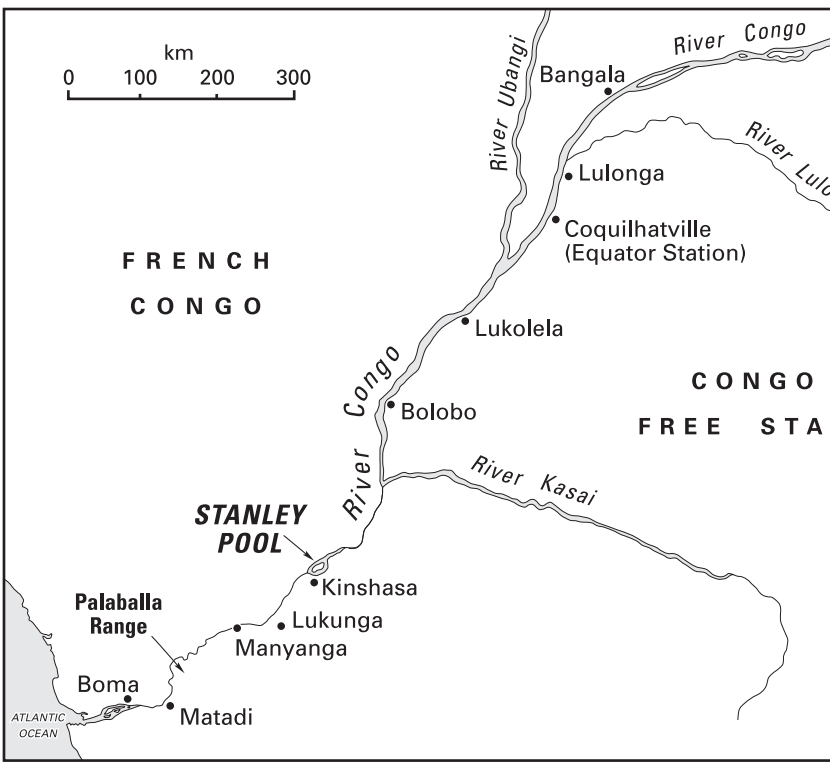
ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

CR	*Joseph Conrad: The Contemporary Reviews*. General Editors Allan H. Simmons, John G. Peters and J. H. Stape, with Richard Niland, Mary Burgoyne and Katherine Isobel Baxter. 4 vols. Cambridge University Press, 2012
Letters	*The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. General Editors Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, with Owen Knowles, Gene M. Moore and J. H. Stape. 9 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1983–2007
Portrait	*A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad*, ed. J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996

NOTE ON EDITIONS

References to Conrad's works are to the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad (Cambridge University Press, 1990–) where these have been published. Otherwise references are to the Dent Collected Edition (1946–1955). Citations from critical and other works in the notes and appendices are identified by author, title and date only.



Map 1 The Congo Free State, 1890