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Conradian Alienation and Imperial Intimacy

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The last several decades have seen a major shift in Joseph Conrad's reputation. His status as an archetypal modernist whose fractured, convulsed narratives represent the turmoil of a literary practice at war with its past has been shaken by an assessment of the racial and gender assumptions undergirding his tales. As the language and logic of imperialism have increasingly been subjected to critical investigation, Conrad's texts have come to mark an important moment in a literary tradition defined not by its heroic break with bourgeois conventionality, but by its adherence to a Western, male world hegemony. [1] Although literary critics on the whole have not adopted Chinua Achebe's bracing denunciation of Conrad as a "bloody racist," they nevertheless have revalued Conrad's work in the context of a discursive economy that functions in both overt and subtle ways to justify imperialism and racial hierarchy (Achebe 788).

Conversely, when Conrad is read sympathetically today, it is typically because of his modernist innovation and subsequent refusal to conform systematically to any single ideological position. In a study of Conrad's place in the adventure tradition, for instance, Andrea White concedes Conrad's problematic accession to the idea of an "imperial subject," but suggests that his use of Marlow and other distancing formal devices prevents the reader from identifying him with a straightforward and unappealing ethos. Even Edward Said argues that Conrad's **[End Page 251]** innovative formal strategies create a radical ambiguity around imperialism, an elliptical attitude that enables Conrad to point beyond imperial discourse: "Conrad's tales and novels in one sense reproduce the aggressive contours of the high imperialist undertaking, but in another sense they are infected with the easily recognizable, ironic awareness of the post-realist modernist sensibility" (Said 188). Thus, criticism tends to set off Conrad's imperialist complicity against his modernism: he is either condemned for ascribing to popular notions of racial supremacy and difference, or, alternatively, his guilt is partially mitigated by his formal commitment to ambiguity, fragmentation, linguistic indeterminacy, and other strategies typically understood as modernist.

What is overlooked by both of these approaches is the important way in which Conrad's

modernism grows directly out of his conflicted relation to imperial conventions. [2] Both of the critical positions I have outlined, that is, fail to take into account the complete interdependence of Conrad's modernist anguish and his reliance on the literature of imperialism. In this essay, which focuses on the highly canonical *Heart of Darkness*, I propose that Conrad's creation of a twentieth-century alienated subject--perhaps the quintessential icon in modernism's landscape--derives from his simultaneous rejection of and dependence upon traditions of imperial narration. [3] More specifically, Conrad's texts rely heavily on nineteenth-century tropes of masculine intimacy and friendship, relations that become the central pivots in his tales of communal and historical disjunction. It is on the threshold of acceptance and repulsion in relation to imperial friendship that Conrad develops the fractures in community, language, and identity that largely characterize his modernist sensibility. [4]

Conrad inherits from Victorian adventure narratives a belief in the fundamental connection between imperialism and male friendship, but the intense masculine relations that he chronicles become disengaged from nineteenth-century ideological superstructures. This separation of male community from imperial ideology creates powerful images of isolation in his texts, not only as social relationships collapse into solitary struggles, but also as language disintegrates as a bearer of truth. When Conrad revises Victorian conventions of imperial heroics, then, he invests intimacy with a new urgency and initiates a trajectory that leads, paradoxically, to social and linguistic solipsism. However, for Conrad to reject a Victorian worldview, in which domestic ideology is **[End Page 252]** neatly linked with homosocial male institutions, and to replace such a system with a modernist iconography of alienation, is not without its own ideological significance. Indeed, what emerges from Conrad's struggle to retain and to invigorate male intimacy is not only alienation, but also a resplendent--if battle-scarred--masculine individual who speaks with a new kind of literary authority.

The creation of empire is inevitably connected with narrative. As many literary, cultural, and historical scholars have shown, English writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a tremendous array of literature (including fiction, poetry, exploratory narratives, polemics, and official documents) that helped to rationalize Britain's global domination. Critics have demonstrated that narratives about empire, and about racial difference more generally, reinforced entrenched myths that both naturalized and solidified hierarchy, including foundational hierarchies of class and gender. [5]

The two genres of imperial writing that best situate Conrad's investment in male intimacy are the travel narrative and the adventure quest, both of which flourished from the latter part of the nineteenth century through the First World War. The boundaries separating these two types of sensational exploratory texts are often blurred, as fictional narratives come laden with maps, tables, and layers of truth claims, while travel tales often utilize fictional tropes and styles to increase their popular appeal. Adventure novels by such writers as George Alfred Henty, Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard, and Rudyard Kipling, and exotic travel tales by explorers such as Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke, and David Livingstone acquired massive readerships and had an enormous impact on the English public, especially its young males. [6] As one critic

explains it:

> . . . the adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after *Robinson Crusoe* were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism. They were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night; and, in the form of its dreams, they charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule. (Green 3) **[End Page 253]**

An essential part of this tradition involved the conjoining of heroic exploration with the creation of male community, both within the stories and in their narrative frames. The texts were organized around uncomplicated male relationships, solidified by race and the tradition of conquest. Moreover, the association of travel writing and romance novels with the public schools, journals such as the *Boys' Own Paper*, organizations like the Boy Scouts, and the glamorizing of national service in the expanding empire added to the atmosphere of masculine community surrounding the literature.

I want to look briefly at an exemplary instance of travel writing, Henry Morton Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone*, which rapidly achieved the status of cultural icon in both England and America. Stanley's work provides a useful template for analyzing *Heart of Darkness*'s complex investment in imperial friendship because, despite Stanley's extreme personal and stylistic dissimilarity from Conrad, the two texts in many ways tell the same story. [7] Published at a time when the "scramble for Africa" was beginning in earnest, Stanley's highly ideological narrative provides a detailed account of his much-publicized journey through central Africa to find David Livingstone. Metaphors of darkness and primitivism abound in the description of Africa, which is presented as a wildly savage land in comparison with the civilized West. [8] Stanley represents himself as a path-breaking adventurer moving across an awesome landscape of "streams rushing northward, swollen by the rains, and grand primeval forests, in whose twilight shade no white man ever walked before" (Stanley 583). His is a journey into the world's primal history, where the category of whiteness is all-important and racial ties overwhelm national or class difference: thus, when he gazes at a ship with American and English flags hoisted side-by-side, he thinks, "I cannot look at them without feeling a certain pride that the two Anglo-Saxon nations are represented this day on this great inland sea, in the face of wild nature and barbarism" (566). In Stanley's value system, there is no substitute for the physical fact of exploring, no race so fit as the Anglo-Saxon for the task, no man so committed to these values as H. M. Stanley.

The meeting of Stanley and Livingstone--a paradigmatic instance of the "imperial encounter" between white explorers--is the climax of the text, and Stanley creates out of the high-pitched excitement of the **[End Page 254]** face-off a larger message about male friendship in the imperial context. In a trajectory that is both structural and rhetorical, the narrative moves magnetically toward the meeting of the two men, as Stanley closes in on his oft-repeated goal "to find Livingstone" (421). Surprisingly, given the stoicism with which Stanley ordinarily represents himself, at the climactic meeting, he self-consciously lifts a veil to reveal an emotional interior, demonstrating first the depth of his feelings, almost a savagery of his own, and then its inevitable conquering:

> And I--what would I not have given for a bit of friendly wilderness, where, unseen, I might vent my joy in some mad freak, such as idiotically biting my hand, turning a somersault, or slashing at trees, in order to allay those excited feelings that were well-nigh uncontrollable. My heart beats fast, but I must not let my face betray my emotions lest it shall detract from the dignity of a white man appearing under such extraordinary circumstances.
>
> So I did that which I thought was most dignified. . . . I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob--would have embraced him, only, he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me so I did what cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing--walked deliberately up to him, took off my hat, and said:
>
> 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?' (411-12)

Stanley's exposure of his own momentary wildness is particularly interesting here at the iconic moment of the text, the scene for which he and Livingstone are typically remembered. The creation of this tableau achieves several aims at once, all of which involve a larger goal of fostering a particular myth about masculinity and male community. Stanley indicates that Western masculinity consists first in feeling and then in mastering emotion, a lesson that his text reiterates on other occasions. [9] His message about what constitutes proper white manliness is more complex than the self-congratulatory heroics of the explorer: a Western man is expected to feel deeply, to have an emotional interior, but ultimately to master that side of himself, much as the conqueror masters the feminine landscape of primeval Africa. **[End Page 255]** Thus, the explorer appropriates conventional aspects of Victorian femininity--emotion and its careful tempering--even at the moment when he most publicly performs the role of proper white masculinity. Indeed, far from challenging large-scale gender assumptions, Stanley's utilization of femininity suggests a certain nostalgia for the strong gender binaries that mark Victorian narratives of domestic life. If Africa is conventionally gendered by analogy (the continent is like a woman; its people are like children; explorers are figures for patriarchal order), Stanley's text incorporates the image of white femininity into the new geography by internalizing its elements within his own behavior. The world of exploration remains entirely masculine without disturbing Victorian norms of gender differentiation.

In the climactic scene with Livingstone, Stanley highlights the moment that for him involves the greatest stakes: the super-charged meeting of two white men against a backdrop of native exoticism. The meeting functions as a moment of racial consolidation, when identity is mimetically shored up, and it establishes a comradeship that Stanley implicates in a firm literary and historical tradition. After the initial meeting, Stanley remains for four months with the doctor, a period that he repeatedly characterizes as a time of joyful camaraderie. He recites a maudlin poem about friendship ("'And this makes friends such *wonders* here, below'" [421]); he admonishes the reader to value such ties, especially in the context of exploration ("God grant that if you ever take to traveling in Africa you will get as noble and true a man for your companion as David Livingstone" [627]); and he stresses the domestic intimacy that the two men develop over their months together.

But the relation with Livingstone is not simply a matter of two men esteeming one another, for Stanley contextualizes their friendship within a deliberately constructed tradition of male adventuring. The creation of such a community actually begins on the frontispiece, where Stanley dedicates his book to James Gordon Bennett, owner of the *New York Herald* and instigator of the journey, who is presented throughout the text as a man of indomitable will. Livingstone, too, is drawn into the circle of Bennett's admirers, as Stanley includes in the text a letter in which the doctor pays homage to the American patron. Financier, entrepreneur, and explorer are subtly united in a common mission as the text enfolds Bennett in its community of powerful men, **[End Page 256]** bent on the conquest of Africa through interlocking connections with one another.

In addition to Bennett, Stanley weaves the famous explorers of the past into his masculine mosaic, recalling a tradition of great men in whose steps he follows, as he, too, should be followed by others. Indeed, Stanley's creation of a masculine exploratory alliance is structured in such a way as to involve the (implicitly male) reader in the heroic tradition and in the ideology of exploration. At one point on the return journey, Stanley pinpoints the process by which the tradition is passed along, as he assumes the allegiance of "Readers of Livingstone's first book, 'South Africa,' without which no boy should be . . . " (601). This is a textual community, created and perpetuated by boys and men who read the stories of their heroic predecessors, passing along their own tales to imagined protégés. Under the protective eyes of Bennett the publisher, the textuality of this enterprise becomes complete. At the same time, the narrative stresses the importance of the physical hardships associated with actual exploration, and mere fiction-making is attacked ("It is a disease, a mania with some people, that they never can relate the positive, literal, exact truth. Traveling in Africa is adventurous enough as it is, without any fiction" [583]). In Stanley's textual community, only true men are entitled to a voice, and their masculinity is developed through the harrowing trials of adventure. Their consolation, in addition to the pleasure of conquest itself, comes in the form of friendship with like-minded men who constitute a self-perpetuating and mutually sustaining community.

The system of male camaraderie and imperialist justification that emerges from texts such as Stanley's is the framework that sustains Conrad's work, and its partial breakdown accounts for the social and literary disruption Conrad so famously registers. *Heart of Darkness* stages the imperial encounter repeatedly, as it adopts, reshapes, and yearns for the traditions of male heroism and camaraderie epitomized by Stanley's narrative (though not by his life), and the text's core of hollowness and anguish--so often theorized as an abstractly epistemological crisis--results from the failure of these moments of male communion to complete the process of social and ideological consolidation. [10] **[End Page 257]** Along the way, Conrad gestures towards an alternative value system that, paradoxically, places the alienated man at the center of textual and moral authority.

Heart of Darkness originally appeared in a commemorative edition of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and for all its withering criticism of imperial hypocrisy, the novella is not as ill-placed in the patriotic "Maga" as it might seem, for the text relies heavily upon standard features of the Victorian travel narrative, both formal and thematic. [11] For instance, the text's persistent image of the adventurer moving (anti)heroically across a hostile

landscape, struggling against the intransigence of the natural world and interacting with a community comprised of other Western male wanderers, represents a direct legacy of nineteenth-century generic conventions. Moreover, as many critics have noted, *Heart of Darkness* revels in standard "orientalist" contrasts between Europe and Africa, civilized and savage, light and dark. [12] Though critics continue to debate Conrad's position on race and imperialism, they generally agree that the evocative and metaphoric power of the story (what one early reviewer termed the text's "atmospherics" [qtd. in White 177]) relies on a series of contrasts that are repeatedly undermined and re-erected, confused with one another, entangled. Conrad's deconstructive project depends upon the existence of seemingly fixed differences between Europe and Africa, and upon the charge created when these boundaries become unstable. The standard notion that "Africa [is] a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril" (Achebe 788) is both a premise and a fascination for Conrad's text, which purveys the "desire--one might indeed say the need--in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil in Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (Achebe 793).

In addition to these much-discussed imagistic and ideological similarities, Conrad's tale borrows structural aspects from its Victorian predecessors, which bear directly on Conrad's fascination with the masculine encounter. The story is organized, through its frame narrative, as a tale passed along from man to man. The initial narrator claims a kinship with the other men who listen to Marlow's yarn that goes beyond the momentary spell cast by their position on the *Nellie*: "Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere [i.e., in the **[End Page 258]** opening tableau of "Youth"], the bond of the sea" (*Heart* 490), a professional and spiritual bond that traces its origins to the explorers of England's past, "from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled--the great knights-errant of the sea" (492). Marlow, of course, will wreak havoc on many of the narrator's premises; nevertheless, the novella's surrounding apparatus--including the narrative structure, the evocation of England's history of exploration and conquest, and the sense of strong male community--elicits assumptions about the connection between friendship and imperialism that had been codified by texts such as Stanley's.

Like *How I Found Livingstone*, *Heart of Darkness* is a rescue narrative, and it shares that genre's structural orientation around men meeting in the wilderness. Although critics traditionally have viewed the movement towards Kurtz as an odyssey of self-knowledge, in fact this apparently inward orientation results from a collapse in a trajectory towards intimacy with another man. Though Marlow launches his journey in the name of exploration, he quickly turns towards Kurtz as the practical and psychological goal towards which he travels, stressing that his search for Kurtz is connected with his own "'destiny in life'" (557). And like Stanley before him, for whom friendship with Livingstone was the primary achievement (in the context of a larger community of successful explorers), Marlow treasures his laboriously attained intimacy with Kurtz. Despite Marlow's tendency to maintain an ironic distance from Kurtz's behavior in Africa, that distance is repeatedly eclipsed by Marlow's insistence on the power and permanence of their bond.

Nevertheless, if Conrad follows the Stanley model in presenting an over-determined encounter between the men as a foundational moment in the narrative, the scene when the two men face one another also demonstrates the particular departure of Conrad's text from Victorian literary assumptions. The meeting is framed by conventional adventure trappings, as horned figures loom in the firelight behind the protective Marlow's back, and it is thus fitting that when the two finally come face to face, Marlow elevates the encounter as an important moment of connection. Despite Kurtz's position of utter isolation, Marlow presents his own arrival as the opening salvo in a new male partnership: "'I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid--to endure--to **[End Page 259]** endure--even to the end--even beyond'" (585). What differentiates Marlow's narrative from the conventional model of men forging their mutual ties against a wilderness backdrop is that his text becomes inconclusive and broken precisely at the moment when he proclaims unbroken and eternal friendship. Marlow's very sentence disintegrates here, and his voice trails off into a vague motion towards the future, suggesting, even as the intimacy is ostensibly being cemented, that the foundations may be as insubstantial as the withered, hollow, and "irretrievably lost" body of Kurtz himself, "'that Shadow'" (585). It is no coincidence, then, that Marlow makes one of his famous pronouncements about the inadequacy of language in the context of this unfulfilled friendship: "'I've been telling you what we said--repeating the phrases we pronounced--but what's the good? They were common everyday words--the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that?'" (586). This moment of linguistic saturation and indeterminacy--so central to the notion of Conradian modernism--is brought on by the inefficacy and incompleteness of the over-charged imperial encounter between Marlow and Kurtz.

This scene of disappointed imperial encounter represents only one of several problematic meetings between the male protagonists. In fact, instead of an exciting face-to-face dialogue, the text offers a series of deferred meetings, so that the long-awaited climax is experienced as something of an anticlimax. The scene in the forest transpires at a point in the narrative only after an initial meeting in the ship's cabin, which is described almost in passing. What does receive extensive description is Marlow's first view through his field glasses of the dramatically open-mouthed Kurtz, where the theatrical nature of the spectacle places Marlow in the position of audience rather than actor--the very antithesis of Stanley, who had self-consciously staged himself in the center of the scene, imagining a future audience appreciating his placement.

Moreover, what Marlow sees in his initial scan of the hillside is not of course a fellow traveler, but shriveled heads on stakes. Instead of two white men creating out of their engagement an affirmation of masculinity and friendship, the text offers one man's encounter with a "'black, dried, sunken . . . head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole'" (573). The revelation marks the almost parodic distortion of the old pattern, a possibility of communion transformed into grim and **[End Page 260]** revolting difference. Where Stanley's narrative repeatedly affirmed that friendship restored life, here the expected moment of visual contact is replaced by death, the destructiveness of imperial rule, and a strong image of emasculation. The head also reveals the glue that holds together an imperial system of male bonds, as white explorers solidify their power

through the death of native people. Although Conrad is fascinated by the imperial encounter and its institutions, he refuses to allow the reader to enjoy its consolations, forcing us, like Marlow, to confront a dead African in the space once occupied by the white explorer *par excellence.*

The formula linking male intimacy with the assurance of an imperial system breaks down in large part because *Heart of Darkness* presents men as profoundly and irredeemably isolated from one another: "'We live, as we dream--alone . . . '" (527; original ellipsis). At the same time, in a circular logic, it is the inconclusiveness of those crucial moments of communion that creates isolation. The circularity of this paradigm of loss and more loss is typical of a text that continually locates the origins of its crises in its own discursive ineffectuality. Thus the novella both records and perpetuates the problem of alienation as a function of inadequate male institutions; the text depicts an isolation from social institutions, which is not so much ontological as historical. The condition of solitude and linguistic failure in the novella derives from the loss of stable, reliable relations of male camaraderie, and all attempts to reaffirm the traditional formulas for male community are undermined by the moral collapse of the institutions that traditionally bolster those ties. With the realization that only the frame of this elaborate edifice remains--that the paradigm is hollow to the core--the text works to recreate those connections through the old channels: passing along the traditions of exploration in the form of narrative. This effort occurs not only generically and in the novella's frame, but also at the level of characters in the story. Even Kurtz, who resists the role of heroic Christian explorer, convulsively grasps at conventions of textual and oral communication among men, passing along his experience and (bankrupt) idealism to adoring men like the Russian harlequin before ultimately disavowing traditional modes of discursive reproduction.

Nevertheless, the tireless Marlow attempts to reaffirm aspects of an evaporating imperial ideology, and he does so by emphasizing male bonds. At one level, Marlow's much-discussed "idea" that is meant to **[End Page 261]** redeem imperialism comprises such values as efficiency, work, and devotion to one's cause, virtues that are organized around the individual and stem from a long tradition of individualism in liberal thought (495). At the same time, however, Marlow suggests that his journey is important primarily because it involves the creation of intimacy with Kurtz. As I have already indicated, the failed trajectory towards intimacy can itself be understood as the cause of the text's movement into self-enclosure without recourse to a purely epistemological narrative. Rather than view alienation as an already-existing and fully formed condition, we can trace the deterioration of community in the text itself, as Conrad depicts the breakdown of sustaining male networks and friendships. As Avrom Fleishman has argued, Conrad's work consistently displays a commitment to a tradition of "organic community," where group well-being is valued over individual heroics: "In a rough generalization, the individualist man projected by Liberal theory becomes in the tropics a conqueror, while the social man idealized by the organicist tradition becomes in action a colonist" (Fleishman 99). Fleishman believes that Conrad admires a self-sacrificing and communal spirit in the colonizer (epitomized by such characters as Lord Jim), but abhors the exploitative machismo of the lone imperialist (such as Kurtz).

Thus, to depart somewhat from Fleishman's view, we might say that *Heart of Darkness* presents a world in which community is desired but reduced at best to the thwarted male

couple. Characters in the novella periodically attempt to return to friendships that follow the Stanley model, which involves both intimacy between men and a wider economy of male alliances, but an impoverished type of partnership inevitably prevails. Thus, Marlow describes his relation with Kurtz not as a part of a system of male bonds, but in antagonism against the Western establishment, an "unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me" (589). This image of dislocation from the group--suggested also in the last lines of the novella, when the frame narrator remarks that Marlow "sat apart, indistinct and silent" (603)--is a far cry from the intricately connected, mutually supportive male matrix envisioned by Stanley. In Conrad's text, the underpinnings of Stanley's value system have eroded, but the interpersonal geography remains. Conrad focuses intensely on the status and meaning of imperial intimacy, yet a larger network of male bonds no longer functions to situate and sanctify the friendship. **[End Page 262]**

Up to now, I have discussed encounters between white explorers and have described the representation of Africa as essentially a backdrop against which European masculinity is defined, enhanced, and challenged, a place where Western men meet and, through friendship, futilely attempt to consolidate a community bound by the ideology of empire. Yet Conrad also tentatively tests the possibility of imperial encounters that cross racial boundaries; these are raw moments, when the possibility of cross-racial intimacy is circumscribed and distorted by the imperative to sustain a particular image of masculine wholeness (see Said 22-31). *Heart of Darkness* offers only a tenuous glance at interracial engagement, which it treats finally as a threatening distraction from the primary urge to create community among white men. A powerful imperative drives Conrad's novella: Western men must find ways to recapture the Victorian spirit of male fellowship if they are to avoid a massive rupture in the possibility of sociality, and this necessity requires that alternative forms of intimacy be foreclosed.

Heart of Darkness presents interracial relations by way of their service to the greater claims of Western male connections, as the text participates in basic structures of mimetic racial identification and hierarchy elaborated by postcolonial theorists. In a seminal work, Frantz Fanon has argued that Western hegemony is perpetuated in part through the colonial subject's enforced desire to mirror the colonist. For men in a racial hierarchy to interact, according to Fanon, the subject must subordinate his cultural and personal identity. Homi Bhabha complicates this paradigm by highlighting an element of mimicry--a parodic, subversive staging of Fanon's mimetic relation. For Bhabha, the colonial subject interrupts the smooth pattern of authority demanded by colonialism, opening up the space for revolt. Thus, encounters between colonizer and colonized represent crucial moments in creating personal identity and power relations, often with disorienting effects for both empowered and disempowered individuals: as one critic neatly summarizes it, " . . . the relation of the colonialist subject to the colonized object . . . [is] a kind of narcissistic self-acknowledgment: the colonizer misidentifies himself or herself in the mirror presence of the Other and is thus alien to his or her own subjectivity" (Behdad 78).

Heart of Darkness largely follows this pattern, but always within its particular framework of desired and deteriorating white male intimacy. Marlow treats the instances when black

meets white not for **[End Page 263]** their potential to constitute cross-racial community, but rather as distractions--seductive possibilities that hover at the margins of the river and his psyche, where he insists they should remain. Rather than consider the idea of communion with African people, or even with an abstracted concept of native life, Marlow focuses on achieving unity with Kurtz, suggesting that the two types of interaction are mutually exclusive. "'You wonder I didn't go ashore for a howl and a dance?'" he challenges one of his listeners, "'I had no time. . . . I had to watch the steering, and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook'" (540-41). Although Africans are represented here in caricature, a mere "howl and a dance," the "snags" in the river and along its shores nevertheless offer serious obstacles to Marlow's progress towards the other man: "'For me it crawled towards Kurtz--exclusively,'" he says of the steamer, and that slow movement requires all other thoughts of human contact to be suppressed (538).

Marlow's energies are directed exclusively towards Kurtz, and his language markedly curtails not only the possibility of interracial communication, but also the very notion of African subjectivity:

> 'I had to lean right out to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though a veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes--the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze color. The twigs shook, swayed, and rustled, the arrows flew out of them, and then the shutter came to. "Steer her straight," I said to the helmsman.' (553-54)

The contrast between Marlow's straight focus and the fragmented chaos in the forest suggests a larger conflict between the magnetism of Kurtz and the attractions of other forms of human contact. Marlow need only extend his body ever so slightly beyond the boundary of the boat, and he is presented with another (presumably male) face exactly "on the level with [his] own," as if imperial encounters of a threatening sort await him at every bend of the river. [13]

What is most surprising here is the way Marlow's rumination on the sensual savagery of the fragmented beings in "the bush" develops out of his moment of eye contact with an African. This instant of **[End Page 264]** human interaction, which might be expected to create a bond, instead leads directly to a dehumanized vision of wild and dismembered bodies. Here, when men come together, as Fanon and Bhabha have argued in relation to colonialism more generally, the result has less to do with the creation of community than with the necessary splintering of native subjectivity in the service of the colonizer's self-image. Despite Conrad's critique of imperialist greed and hypocrisy, the text's social vision nevertheless relies on the existence of a sustaining theory or ideology to make sense of imperial community, and Marlow's movement towards a racially consolidating form of intimacy requires a complete containment of other bonds that might disrupt racial hierarchies. This conflict between white male friendship and the possibility of cross-racial interaction also reflects Marlow's instinct to forge intimacy with Kurtz at the expense of

any kind of community that might, for instance, include women.

Because the racially inverted imperial encounter has dramatic and affective power, it exposes with particular clarity the text's logic of human relations, whereby forms of (transgressive) intimacy are subsumed in favor of the text's primary relational goal. Thus, Marlow describes friendships across racial lines in terms that resonate with irony and suggest the inadequacy of his own imaginative system:

> 'Perhaps you will think it passing strange this regret for a savage who has no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara. Well, don't you see, he had done something, he had steered; for months I had him at my back--a help--an instrument. It was a kind of partnership. He steered for me--I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies, and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken.' (562-63)

Marlow's blunt admission that he views his helmsman as negligible and his trivializing of the man's humanity ("an instrument") seem to work against any idea of "partnership" or "bond." Yet the reverse is true: for Marlow, intimacy with an African is a product of solipsism. That is, Marlow experiences a kind of comfort in the fact that he does not need to take the African helmsman's subjectivity into account; their "subtle bond" is achieved precisely through an absolute disconnection. If the text betrays a strong urgency about establishing moments of **[End Page 265]** physical and psychic communion between Western men, it presents the analogous cross-racial encounters as decidedly unworthy of discomfort or angst. When the helmsman dies, for instance, he gives Marlow a last "'lustrous and inquiring glance'" (556), a moment of eye contact that Marlow insists has lasting importance: "'the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory--like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment'" (563). Yet, as Achebe has argued, this affirmation does not represent real kinship (it is only a "claim"), and hence offers no great triumph for interracial friendship. After the helmsman's death, Marlow's authorial voice has the power to proclaim a bond that not only never challenged the primary relationships in the story, but also even enabled him to bolster his self-image. Once again, the highly charged male encounter is elevated as a moment of truth with the potential for reshaping relations; but, whereas in the case of Western men the failure of such masculine consolidation generates the narrative's central crises, here that breakdown provides a comfortable continuation of racial separation.

If the idea of intimacy with the helmsman seems more a threat to Marlow's straight path towards Kurtz than a viable relationship on its own, it nevertheless retains a certain unspoken power of attraction. The helmsman's death is characterized by relentless physicality; as Marlow stands over the dying man, his shoes are filled with warm blood, and he pulls the shaft from the prone body. The warmth of these proximate bodies suggests an intimacy between the men, yet it is an ironic intimacy, achieved only by the African's death. Marlow's primary reaction is to remove and discard his bloody shoes, which represent a kind of closeness that cannot be tolerated, a temptation to consider new relational possibilities that he refuses. Though Marlow never acknowledges such a sentiment, he refers to it implicitly when he throws the body into the river: "'He had been

a very second-rate helmsman while alive, but now he was dead he might have become a first-class temptation . . . '" (563). The cannibals' potential interest in the helmsman's dead body is only the most obvious instance of his troubling position as a site of confusion for accepted social categories. [14]

I am suggesting that encounters between Marlow and particular African men function in a complex manner. They seem at first to indicate that human and imperial relations reach a climax when two men **[End Page 266]** come together, a legacy of standard Victorian travel conventions. At the same time, the text's sense of urgency about Marlow's relation with Kurtz has the effect of foreclosing other, more progressive options, a tendency that is registered metaphorically by the contrast between the steamer's movement up the river and the tempting, threatening, provocative activity transpiring just beyond the river's edge. *Heart of Darkness* relies consistently for its evocative power on moments of male contact, yet these encounters--whether they involve friendships between white men or momentary crossings between Europeans and Africans--are unable to complete the emotional work they seem to promise because they are no longer connected with a sustaining value system. The ideological basis that had grounded texts like Stanley's has yet to be replaced by a vision that might include friendship across the racial divide, along the lines of a novel such as *A Passage to India*, and both the human and literary costs of this structural no-man's-land are represented as a crisis of alienation.

I have indicated two primary ways that alienation is experienced in *Heart of Darkness*, both of which are directly related to the diminishing power of Victorian conventions of male fellowship: as a problem of intimacy, whereby men struggle hopelessly to create bonds and connections; and as a crisis in language, such that the endless pursuit of narrative proclaims its own inability to convey meaning or truth, despite echoes of confident traditions for reproducing narrative. Implicit in this discussion has been a third mode, which involves a fundamental gulf between men and women, where domesticity and femininity are banished to their own sphere, embodied by two spectral women. [15] It should be clear that the social structures whose absence so troubles the narrative are largely the province of men, since Marlow believes that women have always existed in their own world, and this status generates no sense of disturbance or crisis: "'It is queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be'" (504). The disjunction between the sexes reaches a culmination in the final pages of the text, where the constitutive relation between failed male intimacy and the problem of alienation becomes absolute.

Marlow depicts his visit to Kurtz's "Intended" in exceptionally high-pitched language, even according to Conrad's generally dense narrative standards. The common feature uniting the symbolic threads of **[End Page 267]** the last scene is Marlow's determination to assert intimacy with Kurtz: his declaration that Kurtz is present in his absence ("'He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived'" [597]) and his distancing of the "Intended" by depicting her as a repository for light, against the men's ties with "darkness," suggest an alliance between the men that Marlow is at pains both to capture and to fix. Indeed, the scene represents Marlow's final effort to reinstate a model for understanding male intimacy--his intimacy with Kurtz--that he hopes will ward off the ominous, threatening slide into self-enclosure. Yet, this very effort not only dramatizes its

own futility, but also, in an increasingly complex cycle, demonstrates that the failure to create intimacy might offer real power--the power of textual authority--to the man who speaks out of such an isolated, distanced position. Clearly, Marlow and the mourning woman compete for Kurtz's memory (as when Marlow usurps her sensation of immediacy: "' . . . for me, too, he seemed to have died only yesterday--nay, this very minute'" [599]), and Marlow's decision to lie to her is as much in his own interest as it is an act of generosity. More interesting is the fact that the dialogue directly addresses the sensations of intimacy and distance that permeate Marlow's narrative language. The words exchanged in this scene indicate that notwithstanding a powerful urge to restore friendship, the realization of male fellowship is elusive, its inaccessibility is debilitating, and the consequence of its failure is a collapse into what we might call a specifically modernist subjectivity.

In response to the "Intended's" questioning, Marlow is forced to confront and articulate a problem that has motivated his entire narrative. Characteristically, he depicts his friendship with Kurtz in ambiguous language: "'Intimacy grows quickly out there . . . I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another'" (599). These words are heavily ironic: at one level, Marlow attempts to make a strong statement about the (masculine) intimacy that defines his memory of the Congo, to clarify his status as friend of Kurtz. Yet his words also cut in the opposite direction, suggesting that it is not possible for men to know one another, that if the ambiguous and tortured partnership between Marlow and Kurtz is the best that can be achieved, something has gone seriously awry with male relations. After all, the reader knows that Kurtz's vision of the horror was experienced not as a shared moment with an intimate partner, but rather as a terrifying **[End Page 268]** instance of self-dialogue, which Marlow essentially overhears. To know Kurtz has meant, above all, to understand the man's palpable solipsism.

However, if Marlow's comment here is both overdetermined and inadequate, the woman's response is even further from the mark: "'You were his friend . . . His friend . . . You must have been if he had given you this, and sent you to me'" (600). Her language bespeaks an adherence to a conception of friendship and gender that was widespread in the nineteenth century, but has disintegrated in Conrad's hands. While Stanley could return home to proclaim a friendship that would very likely include a visit to Livingstone's domestic establishment, Marlow's gesture here is of a different order, and is inevitably misread by his interlocutor. As Renè Girard and Eve Sedgwick have powerfully demonstrated, the history of male friendship is often written as part of an ideology of romantic love; the two institutions are mutually sustaining, as in such Victorian ur-texts as Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, which posits the orderly transfer of desire from dead friend to sister as a consolation connected with the rediscovery of religious faith. The traditional language of friendship would suggest that Marlow ought to be in a position to inherit the "Intended" from his dead friend, as part of a triangular paradigm. Yet Conrad depicts the failure of this system, and the consequences within his textual universe are extreme, as each individual drifts menacingly into solitary reverie. Conrad's suggestion in *Heart of Darkness* that domestic ideology is weakening as a social force, like his containment of interracial ties, is intimately connected with the textual urgency to protect and elevate the idea of male friendship, even as he demonstrates that friendship's institutions have lost their viability.

Ultimately, the narrative logic expressed by the "Intended," which is the logic not only of Victorian imperial tales, but of nineteenth-century domestic ideology more generally, cannot produce cultural coherence for *Heart of Darkness*. At the same time, its order lingers as a structural trace organizing and motivating the narrative. The confluence and the contrast between the woman's words and Marlow's thus capture the fundamental cleavage of *Heart of Darkness*. If male friendship is an institution connected with the history of imperialism, then its rituals cannot survive the ideological break with imperialist dogma. The text responds to this movement out of a matrix of male friendships by grasping desperately at the remaining possibilities for deep intimacy **[End Page 269]** and partnership, but this extensive attempt to foster communion is equally untenable, and what remains of the elaborate effort is less an assertion of a new contract among men than a final cry in the dark. "'I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another'"--that is, as an unreachable, isolated shadow. Nevertheless, he who can utter this solipsistic cry is in position to inherit a powerful literary and ethical legacy. If *Heart of Darkness* functions as a representative modernist text, it does so not only for its formal features and its rejection of Victorian morality, but also for its replacement of an array of interconnected ideas about gender, empire, and narrative with an ideological and epistemological system in which male intimacy and alienation become the dominant markers for a new literary authority. [16]

I conclude this consideration of imperial intimacy and alienation with a brief discussion of Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911), a text that begins where *Heart of Darkness* ends: with the deterioration of male relations and its profound effects on both social and literary organization. *Under Western Eyes* takes place in Russia, a terrain that is less indebted than that of Conrad's imperial tales to conventions of nineteenth-century exoticism, yet remains marked in important ways by its unfamiliarity. [17] In a recent study, Christopher Gogwilt has persuasively argued that Conrad's "double mapping" of empire and Europe involves the positioning of Russia as a limit against which "the West" invents itself, that Russia functions in multiple senses as a location of instability for Conrad. We have seen, moreover, that social and psychic instability in *Heart of Darkness* circulates around male friendship, and it thus seems appropriate that the only Russian character in the story--the harlequin who attends Kurtz--represents with particular intensity both the longing and the loss of male camaraderie. The harlequin embodies the novella's basic dynamic of friendship unmoored from imperial ideology at the same time that he ironizes the very conventions of imperial friendship that the text so assiduously maintains. Indeed, the Russian's liminality, symbolized by his patchwork costume and illegible physiognomy, as well as by his national status, renders him a particularly suitable representative of the simultaneous continuity and absurdity of the intimacy ideal. Marlow responds immediately to what he sees as the **[End Page 270]** man's "'destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings,'" an isolation that leads the Russian to worship Kurtz and to hallow their friendship as sublime (568). His obsessive and unreciprocated devotion to Kurtz presents a caricature of the idealized friendships among adventurers that Victorian travel tales had valued.

Even more striking is the way the Russian adheres to the model of textual community that an earlier generation had assumed. His devotion to *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship* is not as extravagant as Marlow suggests, since the book, with its

"'singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work'" embodies a type of narrative that in the past was supposed to create community among men (542-43). When the Russian prepares for "'a renewed encounter with the wilderness'" armed only with tobacco, cartridges, Marlow's old shoes, and the book, he in fact carries with him a symbolic repertoire of adventure literature, since the combination of textual community suggested by *An Inquiry* and the capacity for real power epitomized by the bullets situate him, albeit in caricature, in the landscape of Stanley and his readers (582). Although Marlow seems to miss the point, just as he mistakes the Russian's notes for cipher, he nevertheless responds instinctively to the text's claims on male community: "'I assure you to leave off reading was like tearing myself away from the shelter of an old and solid friendship'" (543). As a representative of Victorian exploratory alliances, the Russian cuts a strange figure, partially eluding the traditional categories and boundaries that sustain the system, and thus demonstrating its cracks and fissures as powerfully as its continued appeal. The Russian harlequin seems to have arrived on the imperial scene simultaneously too late and too early: unable to participate in a Victorian matrix of male explorers, he is equally unsuited to the anguished landscape inhabited by Conrad's more self-consciously modern protagonists.

If Russia functions in part to illuminate the vulnerable aspects of a Western self-definition that relies on masculine connections to sustain it, then it ought not to be surprising that Conrad's most deliberately Russian tale circulates around the problem of depleted masculine bonds. Indeed, *Under Western Eyes* generates a social and personal tragedy out of the shards of failed male friendship. Where *Heart of Darkness* closed by positing the deterioration of romantic triangulation, the later novel meticulously traces the ways in which both domestic **[End Page 271]** ideology and heroic masculinity are casualties of the failure of friendship to produce personal or cultural coherence. As Conrad transplants the action from a geography of imperialist exploration, where we witness the collapse of friendship conventions, to a more ambiguously constructed East-West division, the breakdown of male fellowship is presented as a *fait accompli*, and the text focuses on the powerful and wide-ranging ramifications of this breakdown. Thus, *Under Western Eyes* acts as a legacy to *Heart of Darkness*'s traumatic wrenching of friendship from its imperial bedrock, and also occupies the position of prototype for a basic modernist configuration. The novel presents a social, political, and psychic situation in which the collapse of structured masculine intimacy creates both a desperately alienated male protagonist and a rupture in the ordinary functions of gender. As in *Heart of Darkness*, this dual effect opens up a space for a literary voice that derives its authority precisely from its own disconnection.

Under Western Eyes tells the story of one man's betrayal of another man's proposed friendship, and the psychological, social, and literary ramifications of this treason. The protagonist Razumov is taken into the confidence of a fellow student, Victor Haldin, who confesses to an act of revolutionary violence. Filled with confused rage, Razumov betrays Haldin to the authorities, and the revolutionist is promptly hanged. Subsequently, Razumov meets Victor's sister Natalia, and the two are drawn together by their connection to the brother/alleged friend. At the climactic moment of union, Razumov reveals his true role in Victor's tragedy, and the relationship is destroyed. The rest of the novel moves swiftly to its close, as a mortified Razumov removes himself entirely from

the social world. The tale, which takes place variously in Russia and Geneva, is framed and conveyed through the voice of an English professor of languages, whose eponymous eyes meticulously study the characters. This brief plot summary should convey that *Under Western Eyes* pivots on the utter depletion of the structures governing male friendship. Even more spectacularly than in *Heart of Darkness*, we witness the breakdown of the classic triangular system, in which a powerful and homoerotic male relationship is conducted through the mutual regard and possession of a woman. The story enacts an ironic reversal of the classic friendship topos, resulting not in marriage, but in hatred, betrayal, and a love story that collapses at its climax.

Conrad connects the vanishing of classic rituals of male friendship **[End Page 272]** and heterosexual romance with a corresponding erosion in literary expectations. This linkage is revealed most strongly through the conceit of the novel's title, as the professor's devouring Western eyes witness the failure of a conventional romantic model:

> . . . they seemed brought out from the confused immensity of the Eastern borders to be exposed cruelly to the observation of my Western eyes. And I observed them. . . . And I thought to myself that, of course, they had to come together, the sister and the friend of that dead man. The ideas, the hopes, the aspirations, the cause of Freedom, expressed in their common affection for Victor Haldin, the moral victim of autocracy--all this must draw them to each other fatally. (*Under* 322)

The professor's sense of imperative here "had to," "must"--comes from the absolute familiarity of this narrative: all three young people inhabit fixed positions in a readily understandable love story, as does the professor, who contextualizes and interprets the histories of the sister, the friend, and the dead man. When the professor lists in elevated language the shared values that he believes make the union between Razumov and Natalia inevitable, he might add the Western literary tradition itself, which seems to demand the creation of a couple out of the dead man's friend and sister.

When the result of the climactic scene is not the expected consolidation and cementing of ties, but instead a chaos of dissolution and bewilderment, the secure place within the textual community of a particular literary inheritance is imperiled. The end of the novel conveys the sense that familiar literary consolations have been lost, perhaps never to be recuperated. Razumov ends his life in semi-isolation, a deaf and emasculated recipient of charity; Natalia, whose moral and physical beauty had seemed to mark her out for a life of Victorian motherhood, instead dedicates herself to public works--a Saint Theresa rather than a Dorothea Brooke. Although contemporary readers might applaud this outcome, Natalia's unmarried position at the end of the novel--a result of the fissures that surround the primary relationships in the text--signals the breakdown of literary expectations and commonplaces, a dissolution that cannot quite be naturalized by the professor's repeated allusions to the mystery of the Eastern mind. **[End Page 273]**

What intensifies this sense of literary disruption is the fact that it results not from the events in the story, but rather from the conditions under which the story is told. The hatred that led to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin is never explained. In a gesture whose consequences are extreme, but whose cause remains obscure, Razumov simply refuses

to be drawn towards Haldin in friendship, rejecting outright the usual framework for male camaraderie. Razumov recognizes that for a man with no understandable place in the world, male fellowship holds the best potential for a satisfying return to community, yet he is incapable of sustaining the impulse toward intimacy, and allows the moment of his desire to pass:

> . . . [Razumov] embraced for a whole minute the delirious purpose of rushing to his lodgings and flinging himself on his knees by the side of the bed with the dark figure stretched on it; to pour out a full confession in passionate words that would stir the whole being of that man to its innermost depths; that would end in embraces and tears; in an incredible fellowship of souls--such as the world had never seen. It was sublime! (83)

Razumov's vision of sublime and spiritual friendship, which he understands to form part of a more encompassing social system, is less personal than institutional--a structured communion with his fellow. At the same time, Razumov presents himself as a perpetual outsider and outcast who cannot simply be recruited into a relational model designed to reproduce the nuclear family and its values. In frustration, he explains to Haldin, "'You are a son, a brother, a nephew, a cousin--I don't know what--to no end of people. I am just a man'" (100). Thus at the end of the novel, when the expected unions have been thwarted and traditional gender roles are correspondingly at risk, Razumov's state of disconnection has dispersed itself across the novel's landscape. Razumov becomes the representative modern figure in the text, the rootless wanderer, whose isolated status is determined and crystallized by his (unexplained) sabotage of male friendship.

Under Western Eyes posits chaos across a range of relations. The disruption of social forms, which is also registered as a problem for literary conventions, results from the basic and inexplicable absence of **[End Page 274]** friendship in the primary relationship that opens the narrative. Given Razumov's extreme position of social disconnection and his rejection of male intimacy, his story comes to epitomize the notion that alienated, modern masculinity is generated by a history of lost friendship. [18] Moreover, this sense that the collapse of friendship's institutions produces a representative figure for modernism holds significant ramifications for the literary enterprise. We cannot, that is, separate Razumov's placement at the end of a male comradeship system, like Marlow's before him, from his imperative to narrate. Although we read Razumov's story through a series of filters, the novel makes much out of Razumov's compulsion to tell his tale; his strong desire to confess leads him to self-immolate before the anarchists and also drives him to write the manuscript that becomes the basis of the professor's text. Indeed, if Marlow embodies the desire to recuperate through language a set of institutions that had codified male intimacy--and whose loss has empowered and authorized the male voice--Razumov's literary impulse also derives from the collapse of male ties and his subsequent position of alienation. In both *Heart of Darkness* and *Under Western Eyes*, intimacy is superseded by alienation, and an ethos that privileges the endless narration of the tortured male life comes to replace an imagined history that relied for its security on the comfortable conventions of male fellowship. When friendship loses its power to direct social functions, a new masculine voice emerges--the voice of modernism.

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Notes

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1. In addition to Achebe's famous essay, a seminal work of Conradian demystification in a more balanced vein is Benita Parry's *Conrad and Imperialism*.

2. In this essay, I treat Conrad's modernism as exemplary of the literary category, primarily because of his highly canonical stature within modernist studies. Rather than debating the legitimacy of the canon, assessing Conrad's status in the pantheon of major novelists, or explicating the traditional features of canonical modernism, this essay seeks to reevaluate a number of those features by demonstrating their connection to problems of male intimacy.

3. Critics have used the idea of alienation in a variety of ways. Marxist critics understand the disturbances of modernism to reflect a fundamental response to the bourgeois writers' increasing alienation from productive capacity (see, especially, Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* and *"Modernism and Imperialism"*). Relatedly, critics use the concept of alienation to characterize the relation of the individual to mass culture, a relation that took on new and disorienting shapes around the beginning of the twentieth century (see Huyssen). Thirdly, modernist writers focused on the impossibility of penetrating the borders of consciousness, and this emphasis on the solipsism of the individual psyche is often described as a form of alienation. Finally, recent theorists have looked at gender and sexuality as categories that at the turn of the century created a fundamental disjunction (a form of alienation) between the desiring individual and his/her cultural order, through processes of both social and legal marginalization.

4. A number of critics have argued for a constitutive relation between modernism and particular historical phenomena at the turn of the century. Marianne DeKoven presents modernism as an ambivalent, self-divided reaction to powerful social changes, especially feminism and socialism. Frederic Jameson brilliantly demonstrates that E. M. Forster's dislocated modernist sensibility in *Howards End* is related to the novelist's distance from what Forster understands to be Britain's center of economic activity in the colonies (Jameson, *"Modernism and Imperialism")*. More important for this discussion are several critics who have attempted to link the disorientation and split-subjectivity that typically characterize modernism with a crisis in the discourse of orientalism; such accounts argue that strategies of splitting and fragmentation in Western travel writing occurred at a historical moment when authentic imperial discovery was viewed by European writers to be impossible, when traveling to the Orient yielded not an experience of difference, but

only a reflection of home. See Ali Behdad and Chris Bongie.

5. For especially thorough discussions of the relationship between imperialism and gender, see McClintock and Torgovnick. For accounts of imperialism that deliberately refigure a number of gender terms, see Boone, "Vacation Cruises"; Lane; and Suleri.

6. Numerous recent critics have discussed nineteenth-century adventure literature, often in the context of masculinity. See Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition*, especially 226-77; Brantlinger; Brebach; Bristow; Green; MacDonald; Mangan; Mangan and Walvin; Pratt; Showalter, especially "King Romance"; Torgovnick; and White.

7. I do not want to suggest that Conrad in any way admired Stanley himself. On the contrary, while Conrad had a certain nostalgia for explorers such as Livingstone, whose imperial work he felt had been guided by a consistent moral purpose, he abhorred the materialistic and ethically bankrupt activities of Stanley, to which he alluded in *Heart of Darkness*.

8. For an excellent discussion of Stanley's text and the discourse of primitivism, see Torgovnick.

9. For instance, at his parting from Livingstone, Stanley describes his own near emasculation: " . . . I had to tear myself away before I unmanned myself," Stanley confesses, but in the end "I betrayed myself" with tears (627). Control is only regained when he returns to the task of ruling over his native team: "'MARCH! Why do you stop? Go on! Are you not going home?' And my people were driven before me. No more weakness" (627).

10. In addition to *Heart of Darkness*, the logic of the imperial encounter organizes many of Conrad's other works. *Lord Jim* and *Romance* (on which Conrad collaborated with Ford Madox Ford) are particularly interesting examples in which Conrad aestheticizes and ritualizes interracial friendships, controlling them through the literary rules of romance, but one could look further at *Victory*, the Lingard tales, "The Secret Sharer," and "An Outpost of Progress." For an interesting discussion of male relations in *Romance*, see Koestenbaum, 166-73; for *Victory*, see Lane, 99-125.

11. A number of critics (White, Brebach, Watt) have discussed Conrad's relation to the adventure tradition. None of them, however, have made a sustained analysis of Conrad's focus on masculine intimacy, and they have therefore missed what to my mind is the most important element in Conrad's generic heritage: it is the uncoupling of genre from ideology, in the context of male community, that creates the modernist crises in Conrad's narratives. McCracken provides an analysis of the relation between genre and masculinity in the context of *Lord Jim*. For other discussions of Conrad and genre, see Hamson, Hunter, and Mongia.

12. For an exemplary case, see Parry, 20-39.

13. Significantly, this moment is echoed later in the text when the dying Kurtz insists that Marlow eclipse his view of the passing shore: "'Close the shutter . . . I can't bear to look

at this'" (590). The steamer's shutters perform the task that their name suggests: they shut out those elements of the landscape that neither characters nor text can incorporate into a coherent social vision.

14. One further instance of an interracial encounter that bears mentioning is the appalling scene under the trees at the initial station on the river, when Marlow is confronted by the stare of a starving African: "'The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly'" (511). Again, Marlow's primary reaction, despite his outrage and irony, is to flee the scene, to have no more of the "'grove of death'" (514). Moreover, even at the moment of description, Marlow's use of the definite article ("the") rather than the possessive pronoun ("his") enables him to distance himself from what might otherwise be a moment of humanist pathos and engagement. In dehumanizing the African, Marlow releases himself from the uncomfortable possibility of intimacy.

15. For a brilliant discussion of the male protagonists' urge to be nurtured by a feminine heart of darkness, see Staten.

16. That such authority almost inevitably belongs to men, in theory as well as practice, is one of the most disturbing and important facts about canonical modernism. I hope it is clear that my argument seeks to explain, rather than to perpetuate, the highly masculine nature of modernism as it has been constituted by literary history. It is my contention that the connection between alienated masculinity and literary authority was generated in part by texts that struggled to cope with a disintegration in institutions of male bonding; these texts posited new models of authority that remained very much within the frame of gender differentiation, simultaneously rejecting aspects of Victorian ideology (hence their "modernity") and intensifying the male prerogative associated with narrative.

17. Many critics have pointed to Conrad's own complicated national past as a key for understanding not only the representation of Russia in his texts, but also his treatment of social belonging and alienation more generally (see Gogwilt; Najder, especially 3-38; Sherry; and Watt). Without denying the relevance of biography, I want to stress that Conrad's infatuation with the demise and resurrection of male communities can be situated in a less personal context. Conrad's texts grapple with problems of social community that were much debated in diverse contexts--political, philanthropic, literary--in turn-of-the-century England. For discussion of the gender politics associated with masculine institutions during the period, see Harrison, especially 91-107; and Showalter.

18. Razumov's position of disconnection in *Under Western Eyes* is related to a persistent tendency among characters to elevate the status of national identity: "'Is not this my country? Have I not got forty million brothers?'" the rootless Razumov rhetorically asks himself, but to little avail (80). Although the novel periodically attempts to substitute the idea of the nation for other community models, this effort is thwarted for several reasons: first, an excess of different and oppositional groups can claim the nation for their own, substantially overdetermining the ideological content of the concept; second, Russia is figured in the text as overly vast and illegible to function as the source of personal identity. Though I do not pursue the theme of national identity and modernism here, I

would add that Conrad's focus on the relation between alienation and national subjectivity--a relation that is both stressed and unresolved--anticipates high modernists like Lawrence and Joyce, and, once again, recalls the Russian harlequin in *Heart of Darkness*, whose peculiar national, social, and personal liminality had seemed at odds with his intense devotion to imperial friendship conventions.

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