

its own limits, the tendency to organize the colonial experience as a homogenizing and all-inclusive category; in other words, postcolonial theory must find a way to speak simultaneously for the colonized world and for its multiple others within an international context.

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NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> See Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, forthcoming in 1999; Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso, 1997; and Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.



D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, ed. *Heart of Darkness*. By Joseph Conrad. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1995. Pp. 245. \$9.95 pb.

D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke's edition of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* brings to our attention a novel that needs to be read/taught with a mind to the politics of power and imperial rule. In an interview on CBC's "Writers & Company," Chinua Achebe pointed out "the problem with professors in the West today who don't see racism in *Heart of Darkness* [is that] they are still reading like young boys and girls who are fascinated by the sound of adjectives and the creation of emotion, a cheap emotion, with fear and stereotype" (Wachtel 104). At a time when we see "a rejection of the problems posed by racial content in Conrad's novella [and] a desire for a termination of dialogue" (Johnson 127), Goonetilleke's edition is timely as it prevents a suppression of Conrad's "complex 'dialogic' posture" (Shaffer 46) and promotes discussion on controversial issues such as Conrad's re/presentation of Africans as well as, in Edward Said's words, Conrad's "residual imperialist propensities" (*Culture and Imperialism* xx). This edition contains, in addition to chronological information and a bibliography, a "very substantial selection of contemporary reviews and documents, including comments by Conrad on the text, and a variety of historical documents that may help to give a sense of the time out of which *Heart of Darkness* emerged" (9).

One of many worthwhile features of Goonetilleke's edition is his introduction, in which he invites the reader to consider the following questions: "To what extent is the text imperialistic? To what extent (if at all) is it racist?" and, further, "What are the attitudes here of Marlow and Conrad? Is the reader led toward any position?" (14). These questions resuscitate the discussion of authorial intention, narrative voice, and "the colonial denigration of African cultures" (JanMohamed 160), despite Achebe's earlier forthright objections on each of these aspects, in his essay, "An Image of Africa: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*."

Try as he might to defend and provide almost an apologia for Conrad, even excusing Conrad's "lapses into prejudice" (27), Goonetilleke has to admit Conrad's "patronizing [and] condescending attitudes" and traces of stereotyping in *Heart of Darkness*. He leaves the reader to come to conclusions about authorial inte[r]vention, with the reminder that "Conrad for the most part genuinely believed that imperialistic oppression was a moral outrage" (27) and that Conrad "in no way intended to provide an accurate description of Africa" (10).

Goonetilleke concedes to the inherent, albeit Victorian, racial attitudes reflected in textual references to Africans, such as "faces like grotesque masks" (74), "a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat" (101), "insolent black head" (139), and individuals who grunt, howl, and screech. No amount of deft manoeuvring on the part of critics can excuse the portrayal of non-white peoples in demeaning terms or, as Sartre notes in his introduction to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, deny "the title of humanity to the natives, and [define] them as simply absences of qualities—animals, not humans" (xxvi).

Goonetilleke is among the many critics who admit that Conrad wrote in a very racist time, thereby deserving of forgiveness for what we would consider certain racially offensive references. Said posits the view that it is patronizing to excuse Conrad by saying he wrote as "The creature of his own time," but he, too, forgives Conrad for his short-sightedness by saying that Conrad "could [not] understand that . . . Africa . . . had lives and cultures with integrities not totally controlled by the gringo imperialists and reformers of the world" (*Culture and Imperialism* xviii). In "Notes on Life and Letters," Conrad writes, "Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing . . . a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder of human experience" (Murfin 237). By leaving out the African "lived-experience"—and Goonetilleke admits there is no sustained attempt in the text to represent African culture (24/25)—Conrad is using the place and peoples as mere fictive objects—an exploitation, surely. For, as Peter Nazareth observes, "the 'bush' was not just 'bush'; there were people living there with their own cultural matrix and their own relationship to the environment before the white man came and tore them apart" (182).

For most Western critics and educators, the distance afforded by literary discourse guarantees a safety. However, as Said points out quite rightly, there are those (especially African readers) who would be directly and negatively affected by portrayal such as Conrad's, of African culture:

When Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*, . . . he assumed—obviously wrongly, but that was the bias of the time and I can't blame him for that—that no African could read what he wrote; he wrote for English people. But the fact is that there are now Africans who read *Heart of Darkness*, and what they see in *Heart of Darkness* is very different from Conrad's white contemporaries in the 1900s saw. (Wachtel 89)

We see, then, that teaching or reading this text without the historical, contextual material that Goonetilleke provides, particularly some very telling pieces by Conrad himself that belie his humanitarian stance, is a disservice to the peoples featured in the novella. In order to rectify the absence of authentic African culture, the “alternate identity” of the “savage” culture, Goonetilleke’s edition provides a noteworthy account of African life before Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*, “Benin in Pre-Colonial Times,” which Goonetilleke observes, is “one of the very few narratives—by far the best-written and most reliable—by Africans that give a real sense of the pre-Colonial period in any Bantu society” (43).

In an attempt to safeguard Conrad from the snares of evolutionary theory, Goonetilleke cautions that *Heart of Darkness* was written before the theory of Africa being humanity’s ancestral home became public knowledge, and that it deliberately is predated to show the journey back to the beginnings of civilization. Goonetilleke seems unaware of the irony in this, however.

On the imperialist agenda, he explains that the “essentialist view was the foundation for racist brutality, whereas the anti-essentialist view (ethnocentric though it unquestionably was) laid the path for progress away from imperialistic oppression and indeed away from racism of any sort” (14). We see this view pushed further, in the imperialist maxim of Johann Gottfried von Herder, quoted in John Willinsky’s *Learning to Divide the World: Education after the Empire*: “The barbarian rules by force; the cultivated conqueror teaches” (89). Noting that Conrad wrote “within and against the worst prejudices of [his] time,” Willinsky argues that this benevolent venture of enabling the natives to “progress” was in fact, a promotion of imperialistic racist ideology—and the claim “that [progress] education would raise the colonized along a historical scale toward a level of civilized maturity . . . is simply to imply that the current society was in an infantile state” (92). Thus, the anti-essentialist view, which was based on the premise that “with education . . . native peoples of the world could become just as ‘enlightened’ as [their imperial master]” (Willinsky 14), is seen to be as much suspect of racially prejudiced assumptions as the essentialist and overtly racist view.

It is necessary to hold up to inquiry texts such as *Heart of Darkness* so that, instead of discarding them from English Studies, they may be used to teach the conflicts, inequities, and racial/cultural underpinnings of literature. This Broadview edition is well-suited for our times and appropriate for a politically conscious and diverse readership.

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Hubel, Teresa. *Whose India? The Independence Struggle in British and Indian Fiction and History*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Pp. x, 234. \$62.25, \$20.95 pb.

The reality of India, Hubel points out at the very outset, extends beyond its geographical presence and has an imaginative dimension. As a property of the imagination, India becomes a cultural, spiritual, political, social, and emotional construct. Hence, India may be "owned" by individuals or groups who write about it.

Since writing has the power to establish ownership, Hubel's study treats British imperialism and Indian nationalism in India *as if* ownership and its implicit authority are the dominant themes underlying this history. In the cross-cultural confrontation that occurred between the Indians and the English from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, the opportunity to stake one's claim to a construct-cum-place through writing was enormously empowering. Indeed, the British and Indian texts Hubel examines all seem to be intensely concerned with acquiring India, and so the issue of appropriation figures prominently in her analysis.

In her exploration of the notion of India as a property of the imagination, Hubel focuses on the Indian Nationalist Movement—for two reasons. First, the era of nationalism in India created a political moment when the cultures of India and Britain publicly collided; in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, Indian resistance to British imperialism became organized and represented a profound threat; in response, there was an intensified articulation as well as justification by the British of their role in India. Second, the British-Indian confrontation over India's independence gave birth to contending constructs of India; since these constructs