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Hunt Hawkins and Brian W. Shaffer, eds. *Approaches to Teaching Conrad's Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer*. New York: MLA, 2002. 195p.

CATHIA JENAINATI  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

*Heart of Darkness* is a convoluted and polyphonic postcolonial parable. It is also a controversial narrative in which Conrad's blatantly racist discourse overshadows many of its literary qualities. In fact *Heart of Darkness* still causes a great deal of controversy for its use of the word "nigger" and until recently it was banned—along with Conrad's other controversial novella *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*—in many American high schools and colleges. Although many critics agree that there is little doubt that Conrad would have been aware in 1898 that the word "nigger" was derogatory, yet an astute critic and educator must be able to overcome the limitations of language and ponder the implications of both genre and characterization in order to attain a confident level of understanding of the complexity of Conrad's tales. For beyond the problematic issue of race lie crucial questions about the consequences of imperialism and empire building, the essence of evil, gender politics, and madness. Hence the educator, like the literary critic, must be able to differentiate between Conrad the writer and his creation, the racist narrator Marlow.

When I came across Hawkins and Shaffer's edited collection of essays I had particular expectations I was hoping for this book to fulfill. I was particularly interested in reading about strategies that various educators have devised to tackle the questions of race, class, and gender. I was curious about the extent to which the historical context is being taught and whether some instructors engage with other media in teaching Conrad's fiction. Finally, as I teach *Heart of Darkness* on a Critical Practice module, I was particularly interested in other instructors' experiences of including Conrad in theory courses.

Hawkins and Shaffer have managed to put together a collection of useful essays detailing practical and often original approaches to teaching both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Sharer*. In particular, John A. McClure, Carola Kaplan, and Philip M. Weinstein's essays stand out as examples of perceptive reflections on the novels. McClure's essay, as its title implies, engages with "Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts for Teaching 'Heart of Darkness.'" His approach to the text involves a critical reading of Conrad's narrative in relation to Said and Achebe's criticism of it as a racist text. McClure's strategy involves a two-fold cognitive process by which students are initially encouraged to think along the lines of Said and Achebe's condemnation of imperial discourse in the novel and to research its historical back-

ground for evidence in support of the latter criticism. Subsequently, McClure invites his audience to conduct close textual analyses and to identify the particular instances where “the discourse of imperialism, with its proclamations of cultural and racial superiority, its exoticizing of colonial others, and its celebration of European expansion as a civilizing mission [is] most dramatically deployed” (43). This approach provides students with an opportunity to unearth the latent irony in Conrad’s narrative strategy all the while highlighting the importance of conducting critical analyses from a variety of perspectives. McClure’s laudable pedagogical philosophy is elucidated in his statement of the rationale for his approach as one that seeks to “honor postcolonial readings of the text and to revise these readings in a manner consistent with the values of postcolonial criticism” (46).

Both Kaplan’s and Weinstein’s approaches follow a similar pedagogical pattern whereby students are alerted and encouraged to engage with the various discourses employed in the narrative. In her approach to teaching *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Sharer*, Kaplan emphasizes the implications of genre (modernism) in her reading of gender issues. Deconstruction and psychoanalysis provide useful theoretical tools for students attempting to grasp the representation of the “feminine within the *sous rature* of modernism” (101). But perhaps the most interesting aspect of her approach is its culmination in an exercise of freewriting which demands of students a creative and emotive response to Conrad’s use of language in the opening scene of *Heart of Darkness*. Weinstein however, outlines a pedagogical approach which aims to contextualize Conrad’s writing within a tradition of modern and post-modern narratives, and reads it as belonging to a canon of texts by such authors as Achebe, Cracià-Márquez, Morrison, Silko, Erdrich, and Rushdie. His approach can be useful—though his essay does not provide practical descriptions of his strategies—in alerting instructors to possible comparative texts.

Many other instances of original and practical strategies are outlined in this edition. One of the strengths of the editors’ choice of essays lies in the variety of critical perspectives adopted by the contributors. For whilst some approaches such as Stevens, Militello, Eaton, and Norris highlight the importance of the historical context, others such as White, Williams, Fleisham, and Richardson alert students to elements of the narratology, including themes, characterization, audience, and cultural setting. In addition, this collection of essays is particularly useful in presenting a case for teaching Conrad outside literary studies in fields such as creative writing, film studies, and, surprisingly, at a Naval Academy.

But perhaps the most outstanding feature of this collection is the editor’s own introductory section, “Materials,” in which Hawkins manages to achieve three challenging tasks: he thoroughly outlines the abundant scholarship on each of

Conrad's texts; next he critically assesses major essays and background works; and finally he meticulously cites and reviews the various audiovisual aids related to Conrad's fiction. This clear and concise chapter will provide instructors with a reliable and comprehensive set of references to any form of scholarship on Conrad. Hawkins' introductory section paves the ways for essays in the collection and will no doubt prove invaluable for instructors. ✱