



Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Contemporary Thought: Revisiting the Horror with Lacoue-Labarthe

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With its innovative narrative structure and its controversial explorations of race, gender and empire, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a landmark of 20th century literature that continues to resonate to this day. This book brings together leading scholars to explore the full range of contemporary philosophical and critical responses to the text. *Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Contemporary Thought* includes the first publication in English of philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's essay, 'The Horror of the West', described by J. Hillis Miller as 'a major essay on Conrad's novel, one of the best ever written'. In the company of Lacoue-Labarthe, leading scholars explore new readings of Conrad's text from a full range of theoretical perspectives, including deconstructive, psychoanalytic, narratological and postcolonial approaches. Drawing on the very latest insights of contemporary thought, this is an essential study of one of the most important literary texts of the 20th century.

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Editorial Review

Review

"... provides a challenging and provocative reading of Heart of Darkness - not only for its timely re-assertion of Heart of Darkness as "one of the greatest texts of Western literature", but also for its provocation of the range of responses evidenced by the essays in this volume... Nidesh Lawtoo's volume sets up a critical dialogue between philosophy and literature and makes an important intervention in Conrad studies." -- Robert Hampson FEA, FRSA, Professor of Modern Literature, Royal Holloway, University of London, editor of Heart of Darkness (Penguin, 1995). Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's newly translated philosophical reading of Heart of Darkness, the centerpiece of this volume, is "an event of thought" itself. It provokes in this collection of extraordinary essays, new and richly diverse readings of Conrad's novella. As responses to Lacoue-Labarthe's "The Horror of the West," these essays illuminate, and complicate - through accord, qualification, and disagreement - his important engagement with Heart of Darkness. All confirm, in their engaged and thoughtful attention to the text itself, Lacoue-Labarthe's assertion that Heart of Darkness is "one of the masterpieces of Western literature." Informed variously by contemporary philosophy and by critical theories of narrative, mimesis, and psychoanalysis, among others, these essays respond in their disparate tones and manners, to the French philosopher's contention that the West's "will to power" underlies the horrors of Roman colonization and Belgian atrocities in Africa as well as the Holocaust, current genocides and global violence, thus rendering them of striking currency and urgent relevance to us all. -- Andrea White, Professor of English, California State University at Dominguez Hills, USA Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- J. G. Peters, University of North Texas CHOICE

About the Author

Nidesh Lawtoo is Lecturer in English at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. He is the author of The Phantom of the Ego: Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious (2013).

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