

CONRADIANA



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Editor:

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CONRAD AND CUTCLIFFE HYNE:
A NEW SOURCE FOR *HEART OF DARKNESS*

G. Peter Winnington

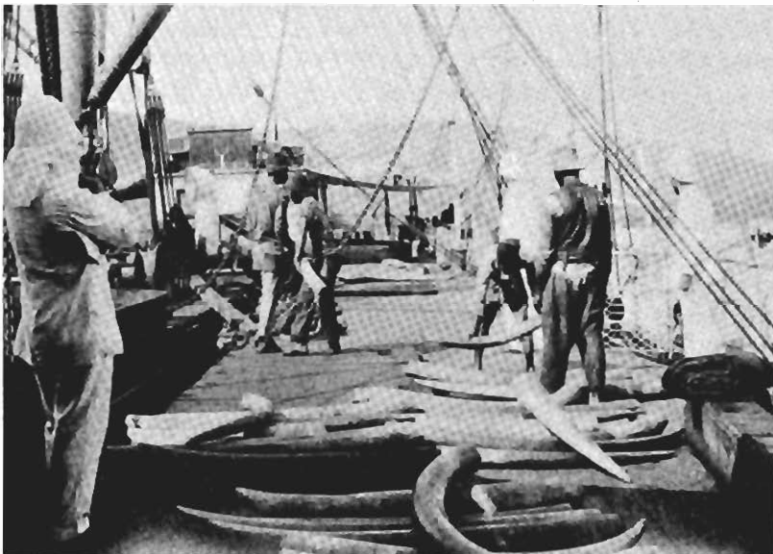
We know that Conrad used the work of other writers to stimulate his imagination and, sometimes, to supply its deficiencies. He rarely admitted to English sources, although he made no secret of his admiration for French ones, Maupassant in particular. Recent Conrad research has begun to show the details of the borrowings he made, not only of others' methods, but also of their words and phrases, their plots and ideas, and even whole characters. We know that "his novels are composed like mosaics from innumerable factual details drawn from life or gathered from books. What is not yet fully appreciated," however, "is the extent to which he used fiction to create his own fiction."¹ This is the context in which I supply a hitherto unnoticed source, in English fiction, for *Heart of Darkness*.

In the 1890s, a Cambridge graduate, Charles John Cutcliffe Hyne (1865-1944), who had already travelled widely (including a visit to the Congo, where he met Roger Casement), began writing short stories and novels. Most of his early productions were pseudonymous boys' books, "the manufacture of which," he admits in his autobiography, "was usually plain theft. The process was accepted by boys' authors of that era without a qualm."² But in the course of this writing he created a secondary character, Captain Owen Kettle, in whom a publisher, Arthur Pearson, saw "an ideal central character for a series of short stories."³ So the adventures of Captain Kettle, which owe more to the author's imagination and personal experience of travelling the world than to the work of others, began to appear in *Pearson's Magazine*, on alternate months during 1897 (concurrent with Wells's *War of the Worlds*) and then monthly throughout 1898. Each month's installment was complete in itself, but sufficient continuity was maintained for the stories to be collected and published in volume form: the first twelve episodes as *The Adventures of Captain Kettle* in 1898 and the second twelve as *The Further Adventures of Captain Kettle* in 1899.⁴

In the series of Captain Kettle stories which began in July 1898, Cutcliffe Hyne sent his hero to the Congo as a riverboat pilot. There he is at once faced with an outbreak of smallpox in a shipload of "recruits for the State Army"—"Slaves is what you English would call dem. Labourers is what dey call demselves" (107).⁵ By keeping his head, Kettle saves most



1. "Inevitable red lamp quarter, Matadi," *My Joyful Life*, facing p. 112; pencil notation of "Cannibal village / M'poso River" on back of photograph.



2. "Loading ivory at Matadi," *My Joyful Life*, facing p. 113; pencil notation of "S. S. Leopoldville loading ivory at Matadi, Congo" on back of photograph, followed by blue pencil notation (possibly by Cutcliffe Hyne in the 1930s) of "Krooboy's bringing ivory on board Antwerp steamer at Matadi."

of the natives—but not the Portuguese captain, who commits suicide by throwing himself overboard.

In the second installment (August 1898), Kettle's colleague, Captain Nilssen, is suffering from a *ju-ju* that a witch-doctor has put on him for appropriating a wooden idol with looking-glass eyes. Kettle goes inland on foot to find the witch-doctor and obtain, by force if necessary, a remedy for the *ju-ju*. He comes close to being eaten alive but eventually makes his escape, with the appropriate antidote to the *ju-ju*. So in this installment, Kettle makes a land journey.

The following month, September 1898, sees Captain Kettle's riverboat attacked by native conscripts who have revolted against their Belgian Commandant. Kettle retrieves the situation by taking command—he is the only man cool enough to do so—but when they reach safety, he is denounced by the Commandant, whom he has insulted. Rather than be arrested, Kettle takes to the river, with the boat and a Doctor Clay, who throws his lot in with him.

In the next installment, Kettle and Clay have taken refuge up an unexplored branch of the Congo and settled in a village there. Worshipped by the natives, whom Captain Kettle attempts to convert to the sectarian creed of his Tyneside chapel, they loot all the ivory they can from the surrounding villages, while dreaming of setting up their own Republic within the Belgian Congo. Their dreams are short-lived: Clay is injured by a falling tree and dies. Kettle composes "a copy of verses to his memory" (450)—for Kettle is also a poet—and then, abandoned by his natives, he is obliged to leave without his accumulated ivory. By the November episode, he has managed to travel on foot "through the black heart of this black continent" (552) to the coast, where his sea-borne adventures recommence.

It will be seen, even from this very brief summary, that there are some notable parallels between Cutcliffe Hyne's story and Conrad's. More precisely, their respective protagonists are both in search of work at the outset; both are obliged to make a hasty departure once the papers have been signed;⁶ both sail out to Africa as passengers on a steamer that calls on various small places along the coast.⁷ Their first encounter with west coast Africans is with a group of moribund conscripts, "not enemies, not criminals," who had been "brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts" (66).⁸ Both make long overland journeys early in their Congo career, and then take command of a riverboat that is attacked by natives. This is followed by a period of isolation, in a place almost as far from civilization as it was possible to get. Here, the second major character in the respective stories, Kurtz and Kettle's companion Clay, is worshipped by natives; they both die before they can be brought

back to more civilized parts. Finally, when Kettle and Marlow return to the coast, they have both lost status in the eyes of their fellows.

Now it could very well be argued that all these parallels are fortuitous, that Conrad's experience chanced to anticipate Cutcliffe Hyne's fiction (for Cutcliffe Hyne went no further than the lower Congo), and that both authors chanced to produce much the same story at much the same time. After all, such a coincidence actually happened to Cutcliffe Hyne. But there is evidence that Conrad read and remembered the adventures of Captain Kettle. Before examining this evidence, let me recall that *Pearson's Magazine* published the work of writers whom Conrad admired, like H. G. Wells and Kipling, whose "Captains Courageous" appeared there in 1897. Conrad probably started to read the Captain Kettle stories during the serialization of *The War of the Worlds*, which followed closely on his making friends with Wells. He certainly became familiar with the periodical and its contents, for on 11 November 1897 he told Fisher Unwin that *Pearson's* had been asking him for a story for some time, but he was particularly insistent that "The Return" should not be offered to them, on the grounds that his story was "much too good to be thrown away where the *right people* won't see it."⁹ Writing to Unwin on both 24 and 26 November, he again stressed that "The Return" was emphatically not for *Pearson's*. In June the following year, when he badly needed money, he told Meldrum that he had turned down their generous offer of fifty pounds for a short story, repeating that he considered *Pearson's* too popular for his own work; he preferred the quality of *Maga*, despite the lower rates of payment.¹⁰ Such insistence makes one wonder if the readership of the magazine was the only thing he had against *Pearson's*. Finally, it is significant for us that Conrad should have started writing *Heart of Darkness* in mid-December 1898—most critics now agree on the date¹¹—for that was immediately after the conclusion of Kettle's Congo adventures.

To come to this evidence, there are, first of all, clear verbal parallels, which I have emphasized in the quotations by the use of italics. *Heart of Darkness* opens on the *Nellie*, with Marlow in the celebrated "pose of a meditating Buddha": "Marlow sat *cross-legged* right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, *the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol*" (46). In Cutcliffe Hyne, Dr. Clay takes an ironical stance as natives sacrifice a chicken before him: "He hitched up his feet and squatted *cross-legged* on the chair, and held up *his hand palm outwards, after the manner of some grotesque Chinese idol*" (442). What is no more than a passing jest in Cutcliffe Hyne becomes a vital motif in Conrad, fleshed out with more physical details and providing a key to

Marlow's character. So it is clear from the outset that Conrad was by no means slavish in his use of Cutcliffe Hyne. What he borrowed, he shaped to his own purposes.

Another instance of this is the path the men follow on their respective overland journeys. For Kettle

The path wound, as all native paths do wind, like some erratic snake *amongst the grasses*, reaching its point with a vast disregard for distance expended on the way. It led, with a scramble, *down* the sides of *ravines*; it drew its followers *up* steep *rock-faces that were baked almost to cooking heat* by the sun; and finally, it broke up into fan-shape amongst decrepit banana groves, and presently ended in the midst of a squalid collection of grass and wattle huts which formed the village. (203)

For all its echoes of Cutcliffe Hyne, Conrad's evocation of "a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land, *through long grass, through burnt grass*, through thickets, *down* and up chilly *ravines*, *up* and down *stony hills ablaze with heat*" (70) is more consciously rhetorical, verbally enacting the laborious progress, and it introduces the pattern of juxtaposed contraries that is characteristic of *Heart of Darkness*. The snake image (if it was Cutcliffe Hyne who suggested it to Conrad) takes on a completely new function and extended significance in *Heart of Darkness*.

There are also small verbal echoes which, in isolation, would appear to be fortuitous but which, cumulatively, suggest borrowings. For instance, at the end of his overland adventure, Kettle is utterly exhausted: "up all the steeper slopes he had to crawl animal fashion on all fours" (210). Crawling, particularly on "all-fours," is a motif in *Heart of Darkness* (see pages 67, 82, 85, 95, 132 and 42). Marlow scorns his command, "a *two-penny-half-penny* steam riverboat with a *penny* whistle attached" (59) which "rang under his feet like an empty Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tin kicked along a gutter" (85). Kettle is "skipping a rubbishy *fourpenny* stern wheel launch" (319); the kicked biscuit-tin is a favorite image with Cutcliffe Hyne; the nearest parallels I have found are a ship whose deck "rippled and heaved like a tin biscuit-box moves when it is kicked" and "the steamers thrilled like kicked biscuit-boxes," both from the first series of Kettle stories.¹² On the other hand, I doubt whether Marlow's meeting the chief accountant "under a *green-lined parasol*" (67) necessarily reflects Kettle's travelling "in a Madeira chair under a *green-lined white umbrella*" (202); it may be that only a single type of parasol—green-lined at that—was available in the Congo in the early 1890s.

Another parallel can be seen in the description of the respective heroes' introduction to the Congo. As soon as Kettle arrives at the mouth of the river,

Captain Nilssen, pilot of the Lower Congo and Captain of the Port of Banana, gave him advice on the subject [of the Congo Free State] in language which was *plain and unfettered*.

'They are a lot of swine, these Belgians.' (105)

Captain Nilssen contrasts his own luck with the fate of others:

'Some day or other they put a steamboat on the ground, and then they're kicked out from the pilot service, and away they're off one-time to the upper river above the falls to run a launch, and help at the rubber palaver, and get shot at, and collect nigger's [sic] ears, and forget what champagne and white man's chop taste like.' (105)

Marlow is initiated by a Swedish steamer captain,¹³ whose opening words, spoken in "*English with great precision and considerable bitterness*," are: "*Fine lot these government chaps—are they not?*" He goes on to tell of how "the other day [he] took up a man who hanged himself on the road. . . . The sun was too much for him, or the country perhaps" (63). The passages are alike in the manner of delivery, the disparaging comment about the Belgians, and the ominous foreshadowing of later events. Whatever Conrad's own initiation may have been (and the Congo diary is no help here), these are clear signs that, consciously or unconsciously, he is remembering Cutcliffe Hyne. Yet what identifies even this brief passage as Conrad's own is the distinctive ironic tone of the Swedish captain's words, the essential uncertainty and contradiction introduced by the "perhaps," and the pervasive theme of mortality.

Another characteristic of *Heart of Darkness* is the long historical perspective by which Conrad underlines that man's nature has not changed much (if at all) since Roman times, for "these chaps were not much account, really. . . . They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale" (50). In Cutcliffe Hyne's description of conditions in the Congo, we find a similar perspective and tone of dry understatement, but not the self-contradictions of Marlow's speech.

There are no ship's chandlers in Central Africa, and it is the custom there, when you lack stores, to go to a village on the bank and requisition anything that is available. The Arab slave-traders who once held the country did this; the prehistoric people before them founded the custom; and the Free State authorities, their lineal descendants, have not seen fit to change the policy. (440)

We may note here that whereas Cutcliffe Hyne had no hesitation in naming the Congo and the Belgians, for he was concerned to anchor his story in a very specific way, Conrad carefully avoided doing so; before *Heart of Darkness* was published, he suppressed the derogatory allusions to King Leopold which he had made at this point in the manuscript. The effect of this was to make his story both unearthly in atmosphere and more universally relevant.

A more complex relationship between the two texts can be seen in the following passage. During Kettle's inland adventure, he is captured by natives and tied down close to three complete skeletons, which lie "picked clean" between stakes, to be eaten alive by driver ants. But he is released by a missionary, and turns on his former captors:

A negro met him in the narrow cut [between the walls of grass] . . . He dropped a *spear* as he turned, and Kettle picked it up and drove the head *between his shoulderblades* as he ran. Then on through the village he raged like a man demented. With what weapons he fought he never afterwards remembered. He slew with whatever came to his hand. *The villagers*. . . at last *all fled* from him as though he were *more than human*. . . there were *no more living creatures left*. . . he had *cleared* the place. (209)

Before leaving, he sets fire to the village.

This is the one time when Kettle loses his self-control; his ability to keep a cool head in extreme situations is a major feature of the first and third installments of his Congo adventures. It is also, of course, a major theme in *Heart of Darkness*, which underlines how the African interior can bring out the worst in the mildest of men. Captain Fresleven lost his life because he lost his self-control:

He went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick. Oh, it didn't in the least surprise me to hear this, and at the same time be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. . . . he whacked the old nigger mercilessly. . . till some man . . . made a tentative jab with a *spear* at the white man—and of course it went quite easy *between the shoulderblades*. Then *the whole population cleared into the forest*. . . Afterwards nobody seemed to trouble much about Fresleven's remains, till I got out and stepped into his shoes¹⁴. . . . The grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones. They were all there. The *supernatural being* had not been touched after he fell. And *the village was deserted*, the huts gaped black . . . A calamity had come to it. (54)

This passage calls for a number of comments. First of all there is the tone: Conrad again makes the scene ironical by his use of "a tentative jab," "of course it went quite easy," and his brief adoption of the African perspective in "the supernatural being" which, in Cutcliffe Hyne, is no more than a prosaic "as though he were more than human."

Then there is the inversion in the order of events and in the roles. In Cutcliffe Hyne, the African is killed with his own spear by the white man, who then loses his self-control. In Conrad, it is the white man who, as a result of losing his self-control, is struck between the shoulderblades by an African. For Conrad, the difficulty of keeping one's self-control in Africa arose from the moral and physical isolation: the absence of the civilizing restraints of law and order, epitomized by "a butcher round one corner, a

policeman round another" (114). Cutcliffe Hyne touches on this theme, but he does not relate it to Kettle's loss of self-control:

There was no law and order here to fall back upon. There was nothing but unnerving savagery and vastness. The sand bar where their wrecked launch lay was out in the middle of the Congo . . . The baking sky above was desolate even of clouds; there was no help anywhere. (321)

Civilization is none the less seen, on occasion, as a mask for less laudable motives:

'Of course,' said Kettle, taking up the thread of his tale again, 'it's understood that we run this country for our own advantage first.'

'What other object should white men have up-country in Africa?' said Clay. 'We don't come here merely for our health.' (440)

But Cutcliffe Hyne is not Conrad, and the theme is not developed.

This passage about Fresleven's death suggests other functions that the Kettle stories performed for Conrad. They will have revived memories of his Congo experience of eight years before. They will also have overlaid these memories, to a certain extent, with new, fictional details, feeding his imagination with events "beyond the actual facts of the case," as Conrad put it in his Author's Note (vii). Thus, where *Heart of Darkness* diverges from the facts of Conrad's life (in so far as we know them), it is sometimes close to the fictional experience of Captain Kettle. Norman Sherry, who brilliantly investigated the factual background to *Heart of Darkness*, was unable to find an account of Freiesleben's death which included such specific details as the spear between the shoulderblades that we find in Cutcliffe Hyne. Nor could he find factual sources that corroborate the original argument over "two black hens," beyond "a dispute over firewood or fresh provisions."¹⁵ In Cutcliffe Hyne, two chickens figure prominently in a scene in the fourth installment (which was published some six weeks before Conrad started on *Heart of Darkness*): they are sacrificed before Kettle and Clay by the local witch-doctor. This is the moment (which Conrad clearly remembered) when Clay takes his ironic stance as a "grotesque idol."¹⁶ It is followed shortly by Clay's death, in the now deserted village. Yet within hours a sacrificed chicken appears on his grave. "This hen killing is bang against my principles," complains Kettle (451). At this point we may note the distance between Cutcliffe Hyne and Conrad; for the former, the contrast between Kettle's religious scruples at the killing of hens and his immoral indifference to the slaughter of Africans is merely comic; to Conrad it is tragic. And we may suspect that at times Conrad will have reacted strongly against the attitudes he found in Cutcliffe Hyne's stories.

It may also be that Conrad's reading of the adventures of Captain Kettle caused him deliberately to depart from the facts of his own experience. Edward Garnett, to whom Conrad apparently outlined *Heart of*

Darkness some time before he wrote it, regretted the omission, in the published version, of the episode of "the hero lying sick to death in a native hut, tended by an old negress who brought him water from day to day." According to him, this was Conrad's experience after his descent of the river by native canoe; during the overland journey to the coast, he was very sick with dysentery and fever. It has been suggested that Conrad was possibly adapting travellers' tales to his own experience, or borrowing from the life of Mungo Park.¹⁷ Whatever the origin of the episode, it may be that Conrad abandoned it as being too close to Kettle, who, after his inland journey, returns by canoe, collapses, and is luckily picked up by a launch. He is tenderly nursed back to health by Mrs. Nilssen, "even though she was as black and polished as a patent leather boot" (210).

There are other instances where *Heart of Darkness* is closer to Kettle's fictional experience than to Conrad's life. Both Cutcliffe Hyne and Conrad open their stories (if we ignore for the moment the frame device of *Heart of Darkness*) with the sailor protagonist urgently wanting to be employed as a pilot on the River Congo. As Norman Sherry points out, "Marlow quickly got his appointment, but it took several months before a vacancy came up for Conrad, and when it came it was a more significant appointment than Marlow's. Marlow is appointed simply as skipper of a steamboat on the river."¹⁸ So is Captain Kettle.

There was no parallel in Conrad's experience to the attack on the steamer, but there is one in Cutcliffe Hyne, with the following significant details: Kettle's nigger second engineer is shot and "lies with his flat nose nuzzling the still-warm boiler" (308). Apostrophizing the corpse with ironical affection, Kettle heaves it to the rail and topples it into the water, commenting, "I guess we'll let the river and the crocodiles bury you" (322). Marlow's negro helmsman is killed too. Marlow drags the body to the rail and tips it into the water, having made up his mind that "if [his] late helmsman was to be eaten, the fishes alone should have him" (74), the irony being that there are cannibals on board who would have appreciated the meal. In the Kettle story, the natives on board are not cannibals, but those attacking the boat "had friends all round—cannibal friends—who would come to help in the fight and share in the loot" (326), which is similarly ironical.¹⁹

To bring the attack on the riverboat to an end, Marlow frightens off the natives by blowing the steam whistle. When he leaves the inner station with Kurtz on board, he blows it again to prevent the "pilgrims" from slaughtering Kurtz's assembled followers. In the Cutcliffe Hyne story, Kettle also uses the steam whistle, but in this case it is the signal for his companions to open fire:

Kettle watched them like a cat. He had the whistle string in his teeth, so as to leave him both hands free for the steering wheel, and when the moment came he threw back his head and drew the string. The scream of the steam whistle was swamped instantly in the roar of a blasting volley. Not many of the shots hit—for the African is not a marksman—but the right effect was gained. The blacks in the canoe ducked and flinched; they were for the moment quite demoralized. (327)

Echoing F. R. Leavis's perceptive comment that in *Heart of Darkness* "Conrad must stand convicted of borrowing the arts of the magazine-writer (who has borrowed his, shall we say, from Kipling and Poe),"²⁰ Ian Watt has singled out this moment for particular comment: "the attack serves to turn Marlow into something of a boy's [sic] adventure-story hero when he strikes terror into Kurtz's followers by blowing the steam whistle. This device had actually been used with success by Stanley and others, but that had been on unexplored tributaries, and by 1890 the novelty would certainly have lost its power for anyone on the Congo near Stanley Falls."²¹ But in the perspective of *Heart of Darkness*, like that of the Kettle story, the inner station is on the edge of unexplored territory and has not been visited by a steamer for over a year; so the effect of the whistle may still convince us. More relevant to the present discussion, however, is Conrad's reversal of those details that we find in Cutcliffe Hyne: Marlow uses the whistle to avert a massacre rather than to start one.

Discrepancy between the actual conditions on the Congo and the conditions prevailing in their fiction can be found equally in Cutcliffe Hyne and Conrad. At the time when the story is supposed to be taking place, Kettle and Clay could not have dreamed of setting up their own Republic within the Belgian Congo (as Captain Paul Voulet was to do on Lake Chad some years later) without leaving the river and its navigable tributaries far behind them. A similar discrepancy occurs with regard to ivory. Historians of the commercial exploitation of the Congo (from Roger Casement onwards) have laid their main emphasis on the horrors of collecting rubber: pressganged natives were sent out to tap rubber trees growing wild; the overseers were encouraged to shoot those who failed to bring back the required amount of latex. Conrad makes no reference to this "trade"; nor does Cutcliffe Hyne beyond a passing mention in the first installment. For them both, the coveted "raw material" is ivory. Indeed, Kurtz's "unsound methods" and his concern for his ivory (much of it "fossil"), his Intended, and his plans, echo Kettle's rapacious collecting:

all the time he went on gathering ivory—precious ivory, worth as much as a thousand pounds a ton if he could but get it home. Some of it had been buried for centuries, and was black-brown with age and the earth; some was new and still bloody-ended and odorous; but he figured it all out into silk dresses for Mrs Kettle, and other luxuries for those he loved. . . (445-46)

It is noteworthy too that, despite this emphasis on ivory rather than rubber, neither author mentions elephants at all.

Turning now to the characters of the respective stories, there are indications that Conrad may well have derived aspects of Kurtz and Marlow from traits in Kettle and his companion, Dr. Clay, although there is never a one-to-one correspondence between them. To take one instance, Kettle in the third installment ("The New Republic") provides a jumping off point for Kurtz. Poets both, they are ambitious, desiring wealth and power, and the jungle offers them an opportunity to satisfy their desires. Both believe they are inspired by the highest principles and are eloquent in their expression of them; yet they succumb to delusions of grandeur and, when they are adored by the natives, they discover in themselves depths of intolerance and cruelty. Clay taunts Kettle:

'If you will set up as a little tin god on wheels, you must expect them to say their prayers to you.'

'I didn't do anything of the kind. I merely stepped in and conquered them.'

'Put it as you please, old man. But there's no getting over it that that's what they take you for.'

'Then, by James, it's come to this: they shall be taught the real thing.'

'What, you'll import a missionary?'

'I shall wade in and teach them myself. . . . I shall go on collecting ivory just the same. I shall combine business with duty.' (442)

His decision taken,

He exhorted vast audiences daily to enter into the narrow path (as defined by the Tyneside chapel), but, at the same time, he impressed on them that the privilege of treading this thorny way in no manner exempted them from the business of gathering ivory, by one means or another, for himself and partner. . . .

If anyone had doubts, he explained further—once. But he did not allow too many doubts. One or two who inquired too much felt the weight of his hand, and forthwith the percentage of sceptics decreased marvellously. (443-44)

He sees no contradiction in threatening the witch-doctor that "as soon as word slips out about our being here, he'll get shot, one-time" (441), for this is the Kettle that ran amok in the second installment. Like Kurtz, he knows that his unsound methods would not be approved down river: "The Congo Free State's a trading corporation, with dividends to make for the firm of Leopold & Co. in Brussels, and they don't like trade rivals. What stealing can be done in the country, they prefer to do themselves" (440). All this leads us straight to the Harlequin's report on Kurtz:

'What can you expect?' he burst out; 'he came to them with thunder and lightning, you know . . . He could be very terrible. . . . He declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory and then cleared out of the country, because he could do so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true too.' (128)

So it seems likely that Kettle contributed to the character and exploits of Kurtz, although he never, of course, attains the degree of complexity and ambiguity of Kurtz. For Cutcliffe Hyne, a witch-doctor is automatically "a cruel devil" (441); it remained for Conrad to envisage a white man taking "a high seat among the devils of the land" (116) and threatening to kill a white man out of sheer avarice.

In this same episode, some of Clay's last words may well have contributed to Kurtz's dying discourse.

'I say, skipper. I'm close on the peg out. There's a girl in Winchester—but hang her anyway. No, you've been my best pal. You're to have all my share of the loot—the ivory, I mean. You savvy, I leave it to you in my last will and testament, fairly and squarely.' (450)

Although their "Intended" is in the minds of Clay and Kurtz, both dismiss her in their final moments. On the other hand, there is a fundamental difference in their last words, Clay eloquently bequeathing his ivory to Kettle and murmuring "so long, old cock" (450), whereas Kurtz, in "that supreme moment of complete knowledge" (149) can only cry, "The horror! The horror!"

Kurtz is not the only character to benefit from Conrad's reading of Cutcliffe Hyne; Kettle can be seen to relate to Marlow too—which confirms our feeling, when reading *Heart of Darkness* that Kurtz and Marlow share a common origin. To start with, Kettle has a Marlovian side in his devotion to the Victorian deities of work, duty, and discipline. He too knows how to restrict his attention to the surface appearance of things when matters become too deep. But more often, however, they are diametrically opposed. Think only of the contrast we have seen in their respective use of the steam whistle, and Marlow's comment on his passengers at this point: "And then that imbecile crowd on the deck started their little fun, and I could see nothing more for smoke" (147). In fact, such is the opposition between Kettle and Marlow that we may at times suspect Conrad of deliberately "writing against Kettle." This is manifest in the characters' attitudes towards seamanship: Kettle is very much "the modern steamship sailor":

He is painter, carpenter, stevedore, crew-driver, all in one day; and on the next he is doctor, navigator, clerk, tailor and engineer. And especially he is engineer. He must be able to drive winch, windlass or crane like an artist; he must have a good aptitude for using hand tools; and if he can work machine tools



Frontispiece drawing of Captain Kettle by Stanley L. Wood for *The Further Adventures of Captain Kettle* (1899) by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.

also, it is so much the better for him. [So, on the Congo, Captain Kettle repairs the boiler] like a workman. He fitted his bolts and made his joints; then luted the manhole and bolted that back into place. (323)

For Conrad, sailing meant sails; to him, "the machinery, the steel, the fire, the steam have stepped in between man and the sea" (*Mirror of the Sea*, 72). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is made to share this opinion: "I was helping the engine-driver to take to pieces the leaky cylinders, to straighten a bent connecting rod, and other such matters. I lived in an infernal mess of rust, filings, nuts, bolts, spanners, hammers, ratchet-drills—things I abominate, because I don't get on with them" (149). In this contrast between Kettle and Marlow, there lies, as I have already intimated, an opposition between Conrad and Cutcliffe Hyne; it is not merely a matter of sail versus steam; it extends to the authors' attitudes to Africa and colonialism as a whole, and stems from the very different philosophies they brought to their writing.

To develop this idea, let me point out a further link between Conrad and the Kettle stories, one that confirms the impression that Conrad was writing against Cutcliffe Hyne's creation: parallels between Kettle and Conrad himself. To start with, they are not dissimilar in some aspects of character and appearance; Ian Watt has typified Conrad as a compound of "seaman" and "seer," the Bobrowski and Nałecz sides of his personality. Kettle is a similar compound; Cutcliffe Hyne devised him with "a strong-working conscience built in two watertight compartments. When he was at sea, drawing an owner's wages, he would be entirely that owner's man, for good or evil." The sins he committed there "were performed on an owner's behalf, and it was he who would go to hell when his time came, and not Captain Owen Kettle." On the other hand, "ashore he would be the disciple of some obscure bethel and savage in his defence of its twisty creed." Finally, "he was to be the infinitely resourceful seaman, supremely tactless, starkly truthful, and without any sense of humour. . . . The reader would wish to kick him for standing in his own light, but love him for his straightness."²² In their pride and their devotion to their profession, Conrad and Kettle are very close, as they are in their short temper, which caused each of them no end of trouble: Conrad "quarrelled with at least three of his captains,"²³ and Kettle, when he is not the master of his ship, argues with all of his.

In physique and in their manner of dress, there was certainly a resemblance between Conrad and Kettle; H. G. Wells himself pointed out that "in the nautical trimness of his costume" Conrad reminded people of Captain Kettle, who was something of a dandy. Wells's image of Kettle would be derived not only from the descriptions by Cutcliffe Hyne, but also from the illustrations by Stanley L. Wood that accompanied the

stories in *Pearson's Magazine*; they show the same "receding face and very carefully trimmed and pointed beard" that Wells attributes to Conrad.²⁴ In the illustrations, Kettle is a bearded man of less than middle height whose stance, in particular the set of the head on the shoulders, more than once recalls Conrad, and whose gaze shares the compound of "reserve, apprehension and scornful challenge" recorded by Ian Watt.²⁵ In fact, had Cutcliffe Hyne not told us that Stanley L. Wood "came across the exact spit and image of our little sailor, pulling beer behind a bar"²⁶ in a pub in North London (to which he returned to refresh his memory every time he had Kettle illustrations to draw), we might have suspected that he had taken Conrad as his model!

So it is my contention that in Captain Kettle Conrad discovered a man who partly resembled himself and whose adventures partly resembled his own. Cutcliffe Hyne had written a story that Conrad could so easily have embroidered from his own experience—but he had not made of it the significant tale that Conrad could. So when Kettle left the Congo, Conrad sat down to write his own version, in which elements from Cutcliffe Hyne merged with his own ideas and were recast with greatly extended significance. Critics and biographers have speculated on what made Conrad turn from *The Rescue* to *Heart of Darkness* at the end of that psychologically and financially critical year, 1898. Frederick Karl for instance feels that "‘dreamily dreaming’ over *The Rescue* must have led [Conrad] to a chain of thought that moved forward in memory from the Malay experiences to those of the Congo two years later."²⁷ Now it would seem certain that the trigger was the Captain Kettle serial. That it was merely a trigger rather than a model is underlined by the fact that all Conrad's literal borrowings are situated in the early pages of *Heart of Darkness*.

Now too we can understand why Conrad was so insistent that his stories should not appear in *Pearson's*: of course he was concerned to establish his reputation as a serious writer by appearing only in "the best" periodicals, but there was also Captain Kettle, who was at the same time too similar and too different, too close and too unacceptable, for Conrad to bear to appear in print beside him. Although the amount he was offered must have been very tempting, for it was a quarter more than he had persuaded William Blackwood to pay him, the presence of Kettle in *Pearson's* weighed more heavily in the balance. So in June 1898 Conrad again turned down the offer to write for *Pearson's*—and what an extraordinary coincidence it must have seemed to him when, a month later, he read of Captain Kettle's departure for the Congo!

I believe that not only did Kettle's Congo adventures move Conrad to write *Heart of Darkness*, but that the very existence of Kettle in *Pearson's*

Magazine contributed to the creation of Marlow. As Frederick Karl has pointed out, "Conrad's route towards the discovery of Marlow is mysterious; we really do not know how or why he came to depend upon this figure."²⁸ In my view, Conrad's "encounter" with his fictional "double" spurred him to create a double of his own, who was to a certain extent an "inverted image" of Kettle. Certainly, the entry of Marlow into Conrad's fiction closely followed Conrad's reading of Cutcliffe Hyne. For *Heart of Darkness* was not the only story that Conrad embarked upon with surprising abruptness during 1898. In May, he "suddenly announced a whole new creative life for himself" with an impressive list of new stories, of which "Youth" and *Lord Jim* were not the least important.²⁹ Common to them and to *Heart of Darkness* is Marlow, and critics have attributed Conrad's sudden burst of productivity to the creation of his fictional double. When we turn to the first series of Kettle stories, particularly those published between January and June 1898, we find parallels which, taken by themselves, would not amount to more than coincidences. In the light of what we have already seen, they are probably more significant than that.

The Kettle story for April 1898, "Mr Gedge's Catspaw," features a cargo of gassy Welsh coal which Captain Kettle undertakes to sail from Newport to Port Said. After several false starts, they reach the Bay of Biscay where he orders the hatches to be covered during the inevitable storm. The gas spreads throughout the ship, and an explosion occurs, the only victim of which is the mate, Murgatroyd, who had been bribed to sabotage the ship. A tricky cargo of coal does not make "Youth," but Kettle's determination and fidelity to his ship are worthy of Conrad's Captain Beard.

At the end of May 1898, Conrad started on *Lord Jim*; over the previous year, four Kettle stories had pointed in the direction of the crucial events on the *Patna* which, according to the Author's Note, formed the original conception of the work, as a short story. In "The Pilgrim Ship" (August 1897), Kettle commands the *Saigon*, an overloaded pilgrim ship with insufficient water aboard, that breaks down in the Red Sea two days after leaving Jeddah. In the following installment (October 1897), the *Saigon* tows a liner with engine trouble whose German captain is not unreminiscent of the captain of the *Patna*. A sudden storm threatens to drive both ships onto rocks, although "the sea did not get up" (cf. *Lord Jim*: "the sea never got up that night to any extent," 112), but it abates just in time. Finally, in "The Liner and the Iceberg" (February 1898), Kettle is the master of a liner that rams an iceberg while crossing the Atlantic; passengers and crew abandon ship; to an important passenger who hesitates to leap overboard, the second mate cries from the lifeboat, "Jump, you fool!" In *Lord Jim*, the pilgrims are frequently referred to as "cattle"; one

Kettle story, significantly for June 1898, sees a cattleboat strike unexpected rocks.³⁰ Again, these stories do not by any means make *Lord Jim*; all the parallels may be fortuitous, but their occurrence within so short a period of time suggests that they served to stimulate Conrad's imagination and helped his ideas to coalesce. What is more, they all occur at the time when Conrad created his double, Marlow.

In maintaining that Cutcliffe Hyne inspired Conrad with ideas for the characters of Kurtz and Marlow and, to a lesser extent, with ideas for events in *Heart of Darkness*, I do not wish to exclude the multitude of other sources of inspiration that have already been pointed out. Ian Watt's remark that "it is essential to the very nature of what Conrad is doing in 'Heart of Darkness' that there should be not one but innumerable sources for Kurtz" is equally applicable to Marlow and, indeed, to *Heart of Darkness* itself.³¹ However, it is clear that Conrad used Cutcliffe Hyne both as a stepping stone and a foil. For Conrad, he was certainly no Maupassant; there seems little likelihood that Conrad wrote with *Pearson's Magazine* open on the table before him, for even when Conrad's wording is very close to Cutcliffe Hyne's, it bears the stamp of his own style. Furthermore, he did not depend upon Cutcliffe Hyne much beyond the opening pages of *Heart of Darkness*; once his own story had got underway, he could cast his crutch aside. On the other hand, Conrad reacted against Cutcliffe Hyne and was stimulated to write. It is characteristic of Conrad, the man and his work, that his relationship with Cutcliffe Hyne should be so ambiguous.

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NOTES

1. Yves Hervouet, "Conrad and Maupassant: An Investigation into Conrad's Creative Processes," *Conradiana*, 14 (1982), 108. Hervouet lists a dozen articles on Conrad's borrowings from French alone.

2. C. J. Cutcliffe-Hyne, *My Joyful Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1935), p. 26.

3. Cutcliffe-Hyne, p. 271.

4. Both these volumes, published in London by Arthur Pearson, and their numerous sequels were frequently reprinted over the following forty years. "It has been pointed out that in Captain Kettle [C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne] created a character who at one time was second only to Sherlock Holmes in the affections of British readers" (*Twentieth Century Authors*, ed. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft [New York: H. W. Wilson, 1942], 1st Supplement 1955, p. 474).

5. Quotations from the Kettle stories are taken from *Pearson's Magazine*, Vol. 6, 1898, as follows:

July: "In Quarantine," pp. 104-15.

August: "The Little Wooden God with the Eyes," pp. 199-210.

September: "A Quick Way with Rebels," pp. 318-31.

October: "The New Republic," pp. 439-51.

November: "The Looting of the 'Indian Sheriff,'" pp. 550-63.

6. Marlow hurries to Brussels and gets his appointment "very quick." Kettle signs on through an agent in England, and leaves equally quickly:

'Shall I have to wait long before this appointment is confirmed?'

'Why, no,' said the agent. 'There's a boat sailing for the coast tomorrow, and I can give you an order for a passage by her.' (105)

7. This is the journey out by Cutcliffe Hyne: "Captain Kettle's voyage down to the Congo on the British and African s.s. *M'Poso*, gave time for the ground-work of coast language and coast thought (which are like unto nothing else on this planet) to seak into his system. The steamer progressed slowly. She went up rivers protected by dangerous bars; she anchored in roadsteads, off forts, and straggling towns; she lay-to off solitary white-washed factories, which only see a steamer twice a year, and brought off little doles of cargo in her surf-boats, and put on the beaches rubbishy Manchester and Brummagem trade goods for native consumption; and the talk in her was that queer jargon with the polyglot vocabulary in which commerce is transacted all the way along the sickly West African seaboard, from the Goree to St. Paul de Loanda" (105).

8. Quotations from Conrad's works are taken from the Dent Collected edition of 1946-55.

9. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 1 1861-1897*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 405.

10. See *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*, ed. William Blackburn (Durham: Duke University Press, 1958), p. 25. For "The Idiots," *The Savoy* paid Conrad £42 in October 1896. When *Blackwood's* took "Karain" in May 1897, he had to insist to get £40. By way of comparison, *Pearson's Magazine* paid Cutcliffe Hyne 50 guineas for each installment of Captain Kettle's adventures (*My Joyful Life*, p. 271).

11. Strangely enough, Frederick Karl, in *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (London: Faber, 1979) is not at all clear on this point; first he suggests (on p. 412) that "Heart of Darkness" would begin to emerge in the spring" of 1898 and he mentions that in July "*The Rescue* would be far from [Conrad's] mind as he worked on *Lord Jim* and 'Heart of Darkness'" (p. 423); next he situates the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* "sometime in later summer or early fall" (p. 426), finally to affirm that Conrad "would not yet, evidently, begin to write 'Heart of Darkness' until the middle of December" (p. 440). What is sure is that Conrad's first mention of it by name was on 31 December 1898: "I am (and have been for the last ten days) working for *Maga*. . . . The title I am thinking of is 'The [sic] Heart of Darkness'" (*Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David Meldrum*, pp. 36-37).

12. The first is from "Mr. Gedge's Catspaw" (5 [April 1898], 447) and the second from "The Guns for Cuba" (3 [February 1897], 132).

13. In making Marlow's captain a Swede, Conrad was not necessarily influenced by Cutcliffe Hyne, for the pilots employed by the Société Anonyme Belge for the exploitation of the Congo were indeed mostly Scandinavian. See Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Western World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971): "Almost entirely, the freshwater seamen who attended to the quite large flotilla that sailed the great river were Scandinavian, some Swedish, but mostly Danish, seamen" (pp. 398-99). Cutcliffe Hyne mentions this in the first installment: "The Congo people want men who can handle steamers. . . . and so they have to get Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, English, Eytalians, or anyone else that's capable" (104).

14. In view of the significance of shoes in *Heart of Darkness*—Marlow steps into Fresleven's shoes; he later throws his new shoes into the river (113-14), and gives an

old pair to the Harlequin (140)—we should note that Captain Kettle is something of a dandy: his shoes are always immaculate. In this same story, “he rode to dry ground without as much as splashing the pipeclay on his dainty canvas shoes” (202).

15. *Conrad's Western World*, p. 22.

16. Amusingly, this scene opens with an exclamation from Clay, “Oh my Christian aunt, look there!”—which prefigures Marlow’s Christian aunt, who saw him as “one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle” (59). This is much the way in which Kettle views himself, when inspired.

17. See Eloise Knapp Hay, *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 121.

18. *Conrad's Western World*, p. 11.

19. On the subject of cannibals, we might note that *Pearson's Magazine* for April 1899, which appeared when *Heart of Darkness* had already been published, contained an article on cannibalism in the Congo, “Where Men Eat Men,” by Captain Guy Burrows, (“Captain-Commandant of the Congo Free State”). It will certainly have appealed to Conrad, for it quotes Livingstone’s observation that Congo cannibals “are a fine-looking race . . . far superior in shape of head, and generally in physical form, to the whole Anthropological Society” (p. 378). Compare Marlow’s comment that his woodcutters are big powerful men, in contrast to whom the pilgrims look “unwholesome” (p. 104) and “unappetising” (p. 105).

According to Burrows, “the skulls [of men killed for food] are stuck up on posts around the village” (p. 380); this inevitably reminds us of the skulls on posts around Kurtz’s hut, “food for thought” (p. 130) and “symbolic” of “his various lusts” (p. 131), and confirms that cannibalism probably was one of the “unspeakable rites” that Conrad had in mind.

Burrows also recounts how, on a punitive expedition, a boy was injured in the shoulder and carried to one side. “I called the men up and told them off to take him up to the camp where the other wounded were lying. They objected that he was only a boy and did not matter. I rated them for their insubordination and saw my order carried through. But for some time afterwards the men continued to grumble, saying that I might just as well let them have the boy for killing when the work of the fight was done” (pp. 380-81). Marlow’s cannibals “are likewise scandalised” (p. 120) to be deprived of the helmsman after he had been killed in the attack.

20. F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (1948, rpt. London: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 199.

21. Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), p. 141.

22. *My Joyful Life*, pp. 268-69.

23. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 16.

24. *Experiment in Autobiography* (London: Gollancz, 1934; rpt. 1966), p. 616.

25. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 24.

26. *My Joyful Life*, p. 273.

27. *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*, p. 439.

28. *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*, p. 425.

29. *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*, p. 426.

30. This story contains a situation and a phrase that crop up, similarly juxtaposed, in "The Secret Sharer": Kettle is picked up from the sea, and the mate lends him some of his own clothes; they fit him well, for the two men are much of a build. The mate is "an old *Conway* boy and brought up to respect discipline," just like Leggatt.

31. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 145.



3. "Palm oil factory in Lower Congo," *My Joyful Life*, facing p. 121; pencil notation of "Melilla Congo" with possible later addition of "A factory" on back of photograph.

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