FEAR OF THE DARK: SURRE ALIST SHADOWS IN *THE NIGGER OF THE "NARCISSUS"*

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No one could tell what was the meaning of that black man.
—Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*

De ténèbres interdites, émerge un monde second (qui est proprement la surréalité) [From forbidden darkness emerges a second world (which is proper surreality)]
—Roger Caillois, "Le surréalisme comme univers de signes"

The Preface of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is Conrad's most concise attempt to give voice to his poetics. It is also a statement that expresses the deeply felt aesthetic principles informing his artistic practice, modernist principles that challenge longstanding assumptions about the relation between art and philosophy, appearance and essence, reality and truth. Going against a long and venerable philosophical tradition that has its origins in Plato's *Republic*, Conrad counters ancient devaluations of art as a mere imitation, reproduction, or shadow of an ideal transcendental reality in order to advocate the creative, productive, and above all illuminating power of artistic creation. He also champions the artist—over and against the philosopher and the scientist—as the main figure on the modernist scene endowed with the gift to unveil what he considers "enduring

and essential" (xi). Thus, Conrad opens the Preface by affirming that "art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect" (xi). The task of the artist, as Conrad famously puts it in an enigmatic passage that continues to require meditation, is thus "to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*" (xiv). And thanks to this artistic insight into the essence of things, he concludes that readers might perhaps even catch "that glimpse of truth for which [they] have forgotten to ask" (xiv).

This is, indeed, a bold opening move for a new artist on the modernist scene. It reopens ancient quarrels long fought between art and philosophy, specialists of affects and specialists of concepts, and redresses the balance in favor of art. The Preface, in fact, stresses that the philosophical focus on abstract "ideas," as well as the scientific take on hard "facts," do not come anywhere near what Conrad considers "the very truth of [human] existence" (xi). For him, as for his Romantic predecessors, literature is clearly not the ancilla of philosophy, nor can it simply be considered as antithetical to philosophy. Rather, literature turns out to be, once again, the feared double of philosophy, a mimetic double that in a deft move of (re)appropriation turns the traditional object of philosophy ("truth manifold and one") into its own object of representation. Given the far-reaching implications of this overturning gesture, the old questions that go along with this literary-philosophical quarrel immediately resurface for the modernist artist and critic to resolve. For instance, the reader is made to wonder: How can the artist bring to light a truth that, we are told, "underlies" the visible and is thus by definition invisible? What exactly is the missing link between the visible world of manifold phenomena and its underlying, unitary "truth," the apparent ephemeral world and what is "enduring and essential?" And if Conrad's early modernist poetics joins art and truth, aesthetics and ontology, appearance and essence, what is the exact logical relation that connects these competing spheres of evaluation?

Over the decades, critics have confronted these theoretical problems by addressing the philosophical underpinnings of Conrad's poetics of darkness. Ian Watt, for instance, in his illuminating and now canonical *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, says that in the Preface Conrad provides "a view of 'how we go'" (79) from pluralism to truth, the singular to the universal. Watt acknowledges that this is already a lot to be grateful for, but when it comes to the fundamental question as to "how to rescue the universal meaning from the evanescent concrete particular" (84), he is much less positive in his evaluation. And in a provocative affirmation he concludes his incisive account

by ironically saying, "three-quarters of a century and many founda-
tions grants later, we still await reliable information" (84). Despite
the impressive amount of criticism Conrad continues to generate in
general and the careful readings generated by the Preface in par-
ticular,[1] we are still awaiting an answer to this fundamental question.
This essay proposes a solution to this literary-philosophical riddle by
revisiting the metaphysical fear of the dark that informs Conrad's
poetics of darkness.[2]

   Modernist writers from Friedrich Nietzsche to D. H. Lawrence,
Thomas Mann to Virginia Woolf, have relentlessly addressed the meta-
physical mystery of the dissolution of the modern subject.[3] But it is
arguably Joseph Conrad who has taken it upon himself to explore the
dissolution of individuation in an ocean of darkness with most tenac-
ity, persistence, and illuminating power. If *Heart of Darkness* (1899),
as I have argued in *The Phantom of the Ego*, is his most ambitious,
well-known, and successful modernist text in this respect, I now
would like to suggest that in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* Conrad
is doing something no less ambitious and equally radical at the level
of both thematic and aesthetic experimentation. In what follows,
I argue that this early modernist text, with its insistent emphasis
on images of darkness, is not only in line with an "impressionistic,"
Romantic aesthetics; it cannot simply be dismissed because of its
"racist" ideological implications (though both principles continue to
inform it). Rather, and more innovatively, Conrad in *The Nigger of
the "Narcissus"* represents a mimetic metaphysics of darkness that
will have to wait the coming of surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s
in order to be explicitly articulated. Rather than relying on an old-
fashioned understanding of mimetic realism to mediate between
appearance and reality, the many and the one, Conrad's poetics
of darkness contributes to the recent return of interest in mimetic
theory by making our understanding of mimesis new.[4] It does so by
advocating a non-realist, self-consciously modernist, and above all,
surrealist fascination for images of darkness that blurs the boundar-
ies of individuation in order to reveal an intimately felt fear of the
dark that is perhaps less physical than metaphysical, less anchored
in reality than in what the surrealist theorist and writer Roger Caillois
will later call "la surréalité" (surreality) ("Le surréalisme" 228). As we
shall see, the detour via the problematic of mimesis and the kaleido-
scopic shadows it generates allows us to tackle and perhaps resolve
the "metaphysical puzzle" Ian Watt urges us to reconsider (79).

Mimetic Ontology: Schopenhauer,
the Ship, and the Black Ocean

First published in 1897, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* occupies a privileged place in Conrad's corpus: it is not only the novel that marks his transition from a life at sea to a life at a writing desk, but is also "the book by which . . . as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, [Conrad is] willing to stand or fall" (ix). This is, indeed, a perilous claim for an artist to make; especially since this text, even more explicitly than *Heart of Darkness*, seems to scandalously operate within the racist assumptions that since Chinua Achebe's publication of "An Image of Africa" in 1977 have continued to haunt, perhaps even rock, the world of Conrad studies. The "N-word" is certainly shocking for contemporary readers to see, so shocking that in a recent edition of the tale, the editor goes as far as substituting "N-word" for every occurrence of the word "nigger" in the tale, now retitled *The N-word of the "Narcissus.*" Alternatively, and on more serious scholarly ground, critics have argued that the emphasis on "blackness" that pervades the tale represents "our human blackness" (Guerard 107), and/or is "epistemologically rather than morally significant" (Shaffer 52).[5] Still, even from this critical perspective, we are left to wonder (with Watt) what, exactly, this episteme of blackness reveals and why this insight should be so central to Conrad's artistic vision. A possible clue is already suggested by the title of the novel itself. We should in fact not forget that there is another "N-word" in the title: "Narcissus." This reference to a mythic figure enthralled with its mirror image to the point of death in a narrative that turns around the ambivalent feelings generated by a dying protagonist should make us wonder which forms of mimetic reflections, speculations, and perhaps even tragic recognitions this novel ultimately attempts to make us see.[6]

This turn to the specular question of mimesis to address the fundamental relation between art and truth in order to cast new light on the images of darkness that pervade this tale—and by extension, Conrad's poetics—might initially surprise.[7] After all, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is not a mimetic text, in the sense that it does not represent a transparent, fully realistic, mirror-like imitation of reality. Even though the events narrated are grounded in reality and external referents are never out of sight, the text is opaque, impressionistic, and modernist in its obscurity. The images of darkness that pervade it, in particular, do not simply re-present a physical, nautical reality, but also seem to re-create a metaphysical sphere beyond reality. This point is suggested repeatedly in the text and is especially visible at moments of crisis when the microcosm of the ship is threatened by the macrocosm of the ocean that surrounds it. For instance, consider

the description of the *Narcissus* as it is approaching Cape Horn, at a decisive turning point in the narrative on which the entire destiny of the crew depends. "Out of the abysmal darkness of the black cloud overhead white hail streamed on her" (53), says the narrator. He continues: "Nothing seems left of the whole universe but darkness, clamor, fury—and the ship" (54). And he adds: "Soon the clouds closed up and the world again became a raging, blind darkness that howled, flinging at the lonely ship salt sprays and sleet" (55). Such dark, ominous descriptions pervade the novel, enveloping it from beginning to end. They set its atmosphere, tonality, and mood, indicating that this is not simply a realistic narrative about a perilous physical journey from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean; it is also a metaphysical journey that exposes readers to the invisible, underlying darkness associated with the direct, and quite literal, threat of annihilation. Could it be, then, that the darkness that pervades Conrad's poetic praxis is there to re-present, in an obscure, enigmatic way, the abyssal dissolution of the boundaries of individuation in a more "enduring and essential" sphere that had, thus far, been mainly the domain of philosophers and metaphysicians?

Interestingly, Arthur Schopenhauer, a pessimist philosopher Conrad had many elective affinities with, also relied on the image of a ship in stormy waters in order to account for the metaphysical relation between the manifold world of phenomena (what he called "representation") and the unitary and essential world that sustains these phenomena (what he called "will").[8] Here is how the philosopher puts it in the *World as Will and Idea*:[9] "Just as in a stormy sea that, unbounded in all directions, raises and drops mountainous waves, howling, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail bark: so in the midst of a world of torments the individual human being sits quietly, supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis*" (416).[10] A sailor, a ship, and a stormy metaphysical ocean that threatens to engulf the fragile boat of individuation—the relevance of such a conceptual image for a writer with metaphysical inclinations who spent half of his life at sea and had first-hand knowledge of such "mountainous waves" is clear. Schopenhauer's nautical image also provides us with a useful metaphysical frame to understand the fundamental polarity that Conrad's novel attempts to represent: if the *Narcissus* stands for the world of passing phenomena linked to individuation (the many), the ocean of darkness stands for an impersonal, immortal sphere linked to what is "enduring and essential" (the one). Conrad's metaphysical riddle could then be rephrased thus: how can the images of the dark, impersonal sea, represent and thus render visible the fundamental reality that both sustains and threatens to founder the personal boat of individuation?

If we return to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* with this concep-
tual image in mind, it is clear that in order to account for the process
of mediation between the essence of things and their phenomenal
apparition we cannot consider the dark, metaphysical ocean in the
background in isolation. Rather, we need to see it in relation to the
physical foreground: that is, the ship (the *Narcissus*), its shadowy
crew in general, and the dark protagonist (the "Nigger") in particular.
In fact, the enigmatic presence of a black character onto which much
of the metaphysical anxiety of the tale is projected, gains clarity from
being read in a relation of continuity with the ocean of darkness that
surrounds and threatens to dissolve what Schopenhauer would call
"the frail bark" of individuation. It is thus no accident that, from the
very beginning of the tale, and repeatedly so thereafter, James Wait
is represented as being quite literally indistinguishable from this
darkness in the background. As he initially appears on board the
Narcissus, we are informed that "the face was indistinguishable" (17)
in the darkness; later, the narrator says that "In the blackness of the
doorway a pair of eyes glimmered white, and big, and staring" (34);
and as his illness worsens and the shadow of death approaches, we
are told that he is lying with his "black face . . . blinded and invisible
in the midst of an intense darkness" (104).

These are unusually obscure visual representations no matter
how dark skinned the protagonist actually is, and over the years crit-
ics have often wondered about their narrative function in the general
economy of Conrad's tale. A common observation is that the figure
of Jimmy embodies the binaries on which the tale is structured, bi-
naries such as white and darkness, but also, by symbolic extension,
life and death, truth and lies, solidarity and selfishness, good and
evil, and so on. This is certainly possible at a deep, allegorical level.
And yet, if we remain for a moment still on the surface of the visual
phenomena Conrad takes the trouble to represent, we have to stress
that what is most apparent in these images of darkness are not so
much the binary oppositions as such but, rather, the conjunction of
binaries. These binaries are no longer, strictly speaking, opposed: a
visual continuum blends the physical darkness of the tragic figure in
the foreground and the metaphysical darkness in the background.
In fact, as the narrator describes Jimmy's "black face" as being "*in-
visible* in the midst of an intense darkness" or, alternatively, when
he says that the "face was *indistinguishable*," it is no longer clear
where the dark human figure ends and the dark background begins.
The repeated definition of Wait as a "shadow" or "phantom" is thus
most apt to indicate his intermediary status: he is suspended in-
between foreground and background, the mortal men on the ship
and the "immortal sea" old Singleton sees, "unchanged, black and

foaming under the eternal scrutiny of the stars" (90). Consequently, if Wait has to be read symbolically at all (as a symbol of death, for instance), we should be extremely careful not to read this symbol in clear-cut binary terms, as if death were simply antithetical to life, the metaphysical darkness in the background simply antithetical to the physical darkness in the foreground. The visual universe Conrad depicts suggests that the opposite is true: as a "shadow" cast against a dark background, Jimmy is a figure that consistently transgresses the "shadow-line" between light and darkness, foreground and background, the physical world and the metaphysical world, what is ephemeral and what is "enduring and essential."

Jimmy is, indeed, a mimetic figure, just as a shadow is a mimetic image; and like every figure, or image, he needs to be framed in its proper aesthetic context in order to be properly understood. It should be clear by now that if mimesis remains at the center of Conrad's single-minded artistic attempt to mediate between the visible "universe" and invisible "truth," *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* goes beyond a realistic principle in order to make us see a deeper, evanescent, and above all more obscure metaphysical principle. It does so by showing how the dark protagonist of the tale in the foreground merges mimetically—that is, chameleon-like—against an impersonal ocean of "darkness" in the background. As we shall repeatedly confirm, this blurring of the shadow-line that structures the ontology of the tale is central to Conrad's poetics; it allows him to establish that "perfect blending of form and substance" (xiii) he strives to achieve, a blending generated by a mimetic continuity that mediates between the personal physical darkness of the protagonist and the impersonal metaphysical darkness of the ocean, the ephemeral phenomenal subject and the enduring, essential reality that both sustains it and threatens to dissolve it. What we must add now is that this mimetic principle has not only ontological implications (the sphere of the philosopher), it is also fundamentally in line with Conrad's affective and aesthetic preoccupations that inform his poetics (the sphere of the artist).

So far we have been floating on the formal surface of the text in order to render visible the mimetic principle of continuity that informs Conrad's ontology of darkness from without. Let us now plunge a bit deeper into that "lonely region of stress and strife" (xii) characteristic of the affective, psychological sources that inform his aesthetics of darkness from within. Much has been said about Conrad's impressionism, and quite rightly so given the neat fit between impressionism and Conrad's opaque images of darkness. This venerable association should however not preclude the exploration of alternative artistic affiliation. In what follows, I would like to suggest that Conrad's af-

fective sources emerge as the tragic figure of the tale is progressively haunted by what the founder of surrealism, André Breton, will later call in the "Manifesto of Surrealism," "the surrealist voice" (27). That is, a voice "that continues to preach on the eve of death and above storms" (27) functioning as "an invisible ray" (47) on the most obscure realities of the imagination. In this sense, Conrad is perhaps a surrealist writer avant la lettre, if only because his Preface echoes, in an uncanny way, principles internal to the surrealist poetics. This does not mean that Conrad follows à la lettre surrealist techniques such as automatic writing, dream analysis, and collage, nor that he is a direct influence on surrealism. Rather, this means that Conrad's poetics is at least partially in line with what André Breton call "the idea of Surrealism." Breton writes,

> [L]et us not lose sight of the fact that the idea of Surrealism aims quite simply at the total recovery of our psychic force by a means which is nothing other than the dizzying descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of hidden places and the progressive darkening of other territory [*Rappelons que l'idée de surréalisme tend simplement à la récupération totale de notre force psychique par un moyen qui n'est autre que la descente vertigineuse en nous, l'illumination systématique des lieux cachés et l'obscurcissement progressif des autres lieux*]. (136–37)

The echoes with Conrad's Preface—with its emphasis on the artist's "descen[t] within himself" in order to make us see an "episode in the obscure lives of a few individuals" in a "dark corner of the earth" (xii)—are loud and clear. But there is more. In fact Conrad's luminous ray into the horror beyond the threshold of life gives narrative voice to a disquieting type of anxiety of dissolution of identity that has so far gone unnoticed in Conrad studies, but that is well-known in the transdisciplinary field of mimetic theory. More precisely, Conrad's representation of a figure that merges against a dark, homogeneous, chromatic background entails an assimilation to space that matches, this time à la lettre, what the French anthropologist, avant-garde theorist, and surrealist writer, Roger Caillois, famously called "le mimétisme" (mimetism) (86).

Mimetic Psychology: Caillois, Psychasthenia, and Dark Space

Unlike his closest early collaborator, George Bataille, Roger Caillois is not as yet a well-known figure in modernist studies. However,

the recent edition of *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, as well as other literary explorations of his anthropological realizations, testify to the growing interest in the heterogeneous work of a writer Georges Dumezil did not hesitate to call "the genius of our time" (qtd. in Frank 9).[11] A brief insight into Caillois's transdisciplinary take on mimesis (a take that straddles biology, anthropology, and psychology) will not only offer us a precious key to continue unfolding the invisible logic that gives form to Conrad's images of darkness; it will also reveal Conrad's untimely anticipation of fundamental mimetic principles that will have to wait until the 1930s and 1940s in order to be explicitly addressed. Mimetic theory, as we can see, shall thus not simply be applied to Conrad; on the contrary, it is Conrad who anticipates and furthers mimetic theory.

In an article titled "Mimétisme et psychasthénie légéndaire" ("Mimeticism and Legendary Psychasthenia") collected in *Le mythe et l'homme* (*Man and the Sacred*) and originally published in 1938,[12] Roger Caillois considers mimetic phenomena of physical camouflage in the animal world in order to cast light on a mimetic phenomenon of psychic depersonalization in the human world. Taking as his starting point certain animals (such as spiders and lizards), Caillois observes that they are mimetic in the physical sense that they have a tendency to visually disappear in order to blend, chameleon-like, with the homogenous background against which they are situated. Caillois notices that in such a state the mimetic animal is, quite literally, indistinguishable from the background, and he wonders about the origin of this disquieting mimetic phenomenon. The classical answer, as he knows, is that mimeticism is a defense mechanism perfected through evolution meant to guarantee the survival of the species. This is certainly a realistic, positivist hypothesis in line with scientific and philosophical principles. But Caillois, surrealist writer that he is, has a different, more artistic hypothesis in mind.[13] In his view in fact "what is essential about this phenomenon" is that the blending between living organism and background entails what he calls a "return to an inorganic state" (116). In fact, he notices that the static insect nested on inorganic matter is not simply invisible but enters in a catatonic state, a state of "catalepsy" whereby "*life*," as he says, "*steps back a degree*" [recule d'un degré] (113). Caillois's conclusion, then, is that rather than being a strategy for survival, this mimetic principle is associated with a drive that pulls the animate, organic being toward inanimate, inorganic matter. Coming close to the Freudian conception of thanatos but echoing philosophical principles that go back to Schopenhauer, Caillois infers from these phenomena a mimetic death drive that induces a dissolution of the boundaries of individuation. As he puts it: "the being's will to persevere in *its*

being [la volonté de l'être de persévérer dans *son* être] consumes itself to excess and secretly attracts it toward the uniformity that scandalizes its imperfect autonomy" (122). In sum, for Caillois, this disquieting form of mimesis whereby a being disappears against the homogeneous background that surrounds the subject is not simply a visual*,* external phenomenon. It also reveals an affective, interior phenomenon that pulls a being on the side of death while leaving it on the side of life: or better, while suspending its being on the shadow-line that both connects and divides life and death.

Now, as an anthropologist of surrealist inspiration Caillois is much more interested in the human than in the natural world. If he focuses on mimetic, natural phenomena it is because in his view this mechanism reveals something fundamental and essential at the heart of humans. Relying on the clinical work of the long-neglected French philosopher and psychologist Pierre Janet—a major source of inspiration for the surrealist generation and, as critics are beginning to realize, a key figure in new modernist studies as well—Caillois establishes a connection between animal mimesis and human mimesis, a physical blurring of forms and a psychic dissolution of individuation, or, as he puts it echoing Janet, "mimeticism" and "legendary psychasthenia" (88). Calling attention to neurotic patients who suffer from a psychic disease Janet calls "psychasthenia" (a personality trouble that affects people's relation to their environment),[14] Caillois explains that "for these dispossessed spirits, space seems to be endowed with a devouring capacity. . . . The body, then, dissociates itself from thought so that the individual crosses the frontier of its skin and lives on the other side of its senses" (111). And, in a phrase Conrad would probably have liked to see, he concludes: "The subject itself feels that it is becoming space, *black space*" (112). Caillois is not simply describing individuals who are physically invisible in the darkness here, but something much more disquieting and fundamental. This process of becoming black space is disconcerting because it is not only something seen; it is above all something felt. Conrad would say that it reaches "the secret spring of responsive emotions" (xiii). It does so because it entails a feeling of psychic permeability to darkness that blurs the boundaries of individuation. As Caillois explains, following the phenomenological and psychological work of Eugène Minkowski: "Obscurity is not the simple absence of light; there is something positive in it. While clear space disappears in front of the materiality of objects, obscurity is 'substantial' ['étoffée'], it touches directly the individual, envelops, penetrates, and even traverses him/her. Hence, writes Minkowski, 'the ego is *permeable* to obscurity whereas it is not so to light'" (112).[15]

        This is why, in his view, children, whose egos are still permeable and not yet fully formed, are afraid of the dark. Caillois would specify that they do not fear darkness as such; rather, what they fear is a loss of selfhood generated by the dissolution of boundaries between the figure and the background: "The magical hold . . . of night and obscurity, *the fear of the dark*, has unquestionably its roots in the threat it causes to the opposition between the organism and the environment" (112). As Jacques Lacan, following Caillois, will also realize, children fear darkness for its affective power to dissolve the boundaries of the ego, just as they jubilate to see their own mirror image for its power to delineate and give form to the ego.[16] There is perhaps even a sense in which the mirror stage, with its celebrated account of the birth of the ego out of the subject's identification with a bright, heterogeneous and ideal form (or Gestalt), is but a mimetic inversion of what Caillois, following the less celebrated Janet, called psychasthenia: that is, an intimately felt experience of the death of the ego out of the subject's identification with a dark, homogeneous, and formless space. In any case, Caillois is careful not to dismiss this trouble of the personality as an anomalous mimetic pathology that affects children or neurotic cases. Rather, he considers both the animal (physical) mimesis and the human (psychic) pathology, as revealing of a more generalized (metaphysical) anxiety of dissolution of the boundaries of individuation in "black space" that affects humanity in general. Thus, his mimetic hypothesis has nothing to do with a fully visible, mirror-like realistic representation of the self but, rather, designates an intimately felt yet truly invisible psychic dissolution of the boundaries of selfhood in spatial darkness, a dissolution that is most intimately and obscurely connected to the horror of death.

        If we now return to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* with these theoretical considerations in mind, the figure of the dying Jimmy, a black "shadow" consistently represented against a background of "darkness" that literally blurs his personal features, begins to appear less impenetrable than it initially seemed to be. Over the years, critics have often wondered at Conrad's obsessive fascination with tropes of darkness in general and his representations of Jimmy's darkness in particular, arguing whether it should be read in realistic or symbolic terms. From a mimetic perspective attentive to the surrealist principles that haunt this darkly textured tale, it is perhaps not necessary to advocate for one or the other of these competing evaluations. As the narrator describes Jimmy as a "shadow of a man," a "black phantom" (151) who is practically indistinguishable from the "the impenetrable darkness of earth and heaven" (104), he is representing on the page a mimetic fear of the dark that will later haunt the surrealist imagination as well. He is also fulfilling the promise made

in the Preface that has troubled critics for so long. In fact, the artist is appealing to his "less obvious" emotional capacities within himself in order to make visible and re-present a deeply felt mimetic anxiety of dissolution that haunts the heart of human beings in general and the narrator's imagination in particular. This is a secretly shared mimetic anxiety that, as Conrad put it in the Preface, "binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn" (xii). In sum, Conrad's persistent reliance on images of darkness, and the mimetic indifferentiation between figure and background they entail, functions as a stylistic-surrealist-mimetic strategy to render visible an anxiety of lost individuation that is neither of the order of the factual (the sphere of the scientist), nor of the ideal (the sphere of the philosopher), but of the affective (the sphere of the artist).[17]

From a mimetic perspective, the binary between symbolic and realistic reading is nonexistent, in the sense that the tale expresses a psychological reality that mirrors in a surreal way an all too human anxiety vis-à-vis the metaphysical darkness of death—a reality that, throughout Conrad's writings, is indeed indisputably "fundamental . . . enduring and essential" (xi). This hypothesis is supported by the fact that these two dimensions of darkness (the psychic and the metaphysical) are constantly associated with the (physical) presence of the dying Jimmy along terms that strikingly resonate with Caillois's account of mimeticism and psychasthenia. Take for instance the long description of the rescue after the storm, as Jimmy is trapped in the submerged cabin, enveloped in a palpable darkness that literally threatens to swallow up his life in the impersonality of death. Jimmy's fear of the dark is intimately linked to a literal fear of death and has a strong emotional impact on all the members of the crew. The narrator says: "The agony of his fear wrung our hearts so terribly. . . . Probably he heard his own clamour but faintly. We could picture him crouching on the edge of the upper berth . . . in the dark, and with his mouth wide open for that unceasing cry" (67). This "picture" is obviously not mimetic in a realist sense; yet, it is mimetic in the surreal sense that it reveals an interior and intimately felt fear of the dark: that is, a fear of self-dissolution in the darkness of space whereby, as Caillois puts it, the subject "is not *in* space, he *is* this space" (122). While agreeing with J. Hillis Miller that Conrad's concern with images of darkness is essentially a concern with a "return to eternal rest" (*Poets* 39), we are now in a position to see that "space," perhaps more than "time," is the key that gives us access to Conrad's metaphysics of darkness. From the beginning of the tale, in fact, the narrator links images of spatial darkness to a real enough fear of dissolution, of being trapped in dark, homogeneous space such as the berths, which, as the narrative had initially made ominously clear, "yawned

black, like graves tenanted by uneasy corpses" (22). In sum, at such moments, it is not simply darkness as such that is associated with the horror of death, but the mimetic continuity between the black figure and the darkness that envelops him, the visible, phenomenal subject and the invisible, enduring essence all around him.

That said, it is important to stress that this struggle with the shadow of death at the heart of a human being cannot be reduced to a personal, existential, or minoritarian struggle. Darkness, as it operates in the textual economy of the tale, is not only linked to the dying black subject but, from the very beginning of the journey, stretches in order to envelop all the subjects on the frail bark of in-dividuation, shadowy subjects whose "responsive emotions" render them affectively vulnerable to the psycho-metaphysical fear of the dark physically embodied by Jimmy.[18] We are told, for instance, that the presence of Jimmy "overshadowed the ship" (47). As Jimmy is first introduced we see him coming to the fore by "detaching himself from the shadowy mob of heads visible above the blackness" (15). And in a revealing passage we are also told that he "seemed to has-ten the retreat of departing light by his very presence . . . a black mist emanated from him; a subtle and dismal influence; a something cold and gloomy that floated out and settled on all the faces *like a mourning veil*" (34; emphasis added). Clearly it is not only Jimmy who is dark; the mob is shadowy too. Consistently, the other (white) members of the crew are defined as "heavy shadows" (145), "black clusters of human forms" (123), or as the narrator says at the very beginning of the tale, "silhouettes . . . very black, without relief, like figures cut out of sheet tin" (3). Blackness is clearly not restricted to racial blackness but reflects, in a non-realistic move, a more general-ized metaphysical fear of the dark (and the dissolution of boundaries it entails) that haunts the crew in general and, as we shall soon see, the narrator's imagination in particular.[19] These shadows, like all shadows, are mimetic in the surreal sense that they generate forms without boundaries, subjects without relief, appearances without substance. These figures that emerge from the darkness are not men but shadows of men, not egos but phantoms of egos.

The shadow of mimesis represented in the novel is instrumen-tal in bringing together the (anti-)Platonic, Schopenahuerian, and Surrealist threads that inform Conrad's poetics of darkness. Toward the end of the tale, while Jimmy is waiting to die, Conrad's mimetic rhetoric takes us through an impressive tour de force that has the power to inverse metaphysical relations between truth and illusion, phantoms and reality: "In the magnificence of the phantom rays the ship appeared pure like a vision of ideal beauty, illusive like a tender dream of serene peace. And nothing in her was real, nothing was

distinct and solid but the heavy shadows that filled her decks with their unceasing and noiseless stir: the shadows darker than the night and more restless than the thoughts of men" (145). Conrad's ascension to the high spheres of "ideal beauty" appears to be Platonic in orientation, and yet, the artist ironically undermines this Platonism by linking a seemingly ideal, transcendental "vision" to the mimetic, immanent sphere of "phantom[s]." Thus he suggests, this time with Schopenhauer, that what appears to be "real" is but a "dream" or "illusion." Finally, in a surrealist mood in line with Caillois, he locates what is real and essential in the mimetic sphere of "shadows darker than the night," surrealist shadows that mirror the secret "thoughts of men" concerned with the looming shadow of death. Indeed, the shadow of mimesis has fallen on more than one ego; and, as Caillois puts it, "from forbidden darkness emerges a second world (which is proper surreality)" ("Le surréalisme" 228).

Seen in this light, then, the crew's deeply ambivalent feelings that swing them toward "Jimmy" and away from the "Nigger" continue to be related to the much-discussed issues of moral solidarity generated by the secretly shared threat of annihilation. They also mirror the little-discussed ambivalence of the crew's mimetic fear of the dark and the dissolution in the physical and metaphysical darkness it foreshadows. In the middle of a violent storm that threatens to disrupt their "small planet" (29) in the "black turmoil of the waves," we read that "Their thoughts floated vaguely between the desire to rest and the desire of life" (92). This is a revealing remark if we read it against the mimetic background we have been sketching. It allows us to see that the sailor's external battle with the sea functions as a surrealist mirror of an interior battle confronting two oppositional tendencies: one toward life and anti-mimetic differentiation, the other toward death and mimetic indifferentiation; one toward the discontinuity of form, the other toward the continuity of darkness; one toward real images of light, the other toward the surreal shadows of the night. Accordingly, the crew's ambivalence toward Jimmy can be read not only in moral or ideological terms, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, in terms of the surrealist fear of the dark generated by the "center of the ship's collective psychology" (ix): that is, a darkness that threatens to disrupt the boundaries of subjectivity from both within (tuberculosis) and from without (the tempest) and is rendered visible by dark human figures cast against a dark background (mimeticism). This mimetic dissolution is feared for the threat to life it presents; yet, its "light of magic suggestiveness" (xiii) is also attractive for the promise of the liberation of the burden of differentiation it entails. What we must add now is that this ambivalence does not only operate at the level of the mimetic

message of Conrad's tale we have been exploring thus far, but also at the level of its mimetic medium that informs this tale. It is to this medium we now turn to in order to complete our account of Conrad's "perfect blending of form and substance" (xiii).

Mimetic Narratology: from Diegesis to Mimesis (and Back)

Even though *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* does not rely on the modernist devices characteristic of *Heart of Darkness*, Stephen Ross rightly considers it "one of the decisive moments in the emergence of modernism" (271). This is true for its emphasis on irony, ambivalence, and radical epistemological uncertainty, but also because its narrative form mirrors, in a self-reflecting (rather than realistic) turn, the double-movement of attraction and repulsion generated by the mimetic shadow of death. As commentators have long recognized, this text is not predicated on a unitary (homogeneous) narrative perspective, but relies on a participant narrator who oscillates between two competing (heterogeneous) narrative voices: a third-person singular narrative voice that considers events from a position of critical distance (or "they-narration"), and a more empathic, first-person plural narrative voice that affectively involves the narrator in the darkness he represents ("we-narration"). If early critics have tended to dismiss this oscillation as an inconsistency or technical failure, more recent developments have been less evaluative and more explicative in their approach, recognizing the modernist (even postmodernist) implications of this narrative choice.[20] And in order to account for the logic that informs such oscillating shifts of perspective, critics themselves have oscillated between mimetic and nonmimetic tendencies.[21] In order to continue clarifying the invisible logic of these oscillations, I suggest that we should move beyond mimetic/anti-mimetic principles (understood in terms of realist representation) in order to consider these narrative shifts from an alternative, yet still deeply Conradian, mimetic perspective (understood in terms of surrealist narration). That is, a perspective that considers mimesis both as the medium and the message of the tale.

We have become so accustomed to considering mimesis from the angle of realism that it is easy to forget that an alternative, narratological sense of mimesis operates in the Western tradition from the very origins of mimetic theory onwards. Let us recall that as the concept of *mimesis* initially appears in Book 3 of Plato's *Republic*, it does not so much designate a mimetic message (logos) or a realistic narrative strategy.[22] Rather, Socrates initially introduces this concept

in order to distinguish between different modes of poetic diction (lexis) associated with a reciter of poetry on the theatrical stage: what he calls mimesis, diegesis, and mixed style.[23] Introducing these Platonic narratological distinctions into Conrad studies, the French philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe recently grounds his philosophical reading of *Heart of Darkness*, "The Horror of the West," on what he calls a "*dispositif 'mimétique'*" (mimetic device) (112). For Lacoue-Labarthe this narrative device, whereby Conrad's multiple narrators oscillate between mimesis and diegesis, is instrumental in rendering Kurtz's experience of "the horror" if not fully visible then at least emotionally audible (112–13).[24] In order to further this innovative line of inquiry we must add that such an oscillating mimetic device is equally at work in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* albeit within a singular-plural narrative voice, giving form to the medium of Conrad's message.[25]

Indeed, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* Conrad's poetic practice oscillates, pendulum-like, between two modes of narrative lexis as he moves from a diegetic third-person singular voice (they-narration) to a mimetic first-person plural (we-narration). This is no accidental or clumsy narrative move; on the contrary, it makes possible what Miller calls "a double motion of descent into the darkness and return from it" (*Poets* 37). In our language, this narrative oscillation mirrors, at the level of the medium, the fundamental affective ambivalence toward the mimetic fear of the dark, at the level of the message. On the one hand, the first-person plural mimetic narrative (we-narration) is predicated on a mimetic lexis that gives voice to feelings of empathy and solidarity with the crew. This narrative mode involves the narrator in an experience of shared communion that puts him affectively in touch with the living pathos generated by the shadow of death. For instance, this is how Jimmy is addressed after his rescue: "We pressed round him, bothered and dismayed; sheltering him we swung here and there in a body; and on the very brink of eternity we tottered all together with concealing and absurd gestures, like a lot of drunken men embarrassed with a stolen corpse" (71). The narrative voice plunges via a mimetic device into the "lonely region of stress and strife" (xii) centered on the black subject and represented by the Sturm und Drang of the metaphysics of darkness that surrounds them. In this sense, this narrative choice allows the narrator, and us with him, to participate in the mimetic pathos of that phantom who is closest to the shadow of death, to partake in the collective feelings of solidarity that emerge from this shared experience, and even to come as close as possible to the "brink of eternity"—while remaining on the side of life. Further, the mimetic narrative is also instrumental in merging the narrator's singular, heterogeneous voice with the collective, homogeneous voice of the crew and the "clamour"

they experience. There is thus a sense in which the formal level of the mimetic medium (or lexis) replicates the mimetic dissolution that is at work at the level of the message (or logos).

On the other hand, the third-person diegetic narrative (they-narration) tends to be voiced in imagistic, visual, poetic, at times ironic, language that distinguishes the narrator from the rest of the crew, introducing a distance from the contagious pathos that affects them. This voice often has the characteristics of omniscience and encourages a cold, speculative, even clinical attitude toward the affective experiences that emerge as the crew of the *Narcissus* is confronted with the shadow of death. For instance, in the midst of the gale, the narrator addresses the emotional oscillation between life and death that affects the crew in precise, detached, visual terms: "their thoughts floated vaguely between the desire of rest and the desire of life . . . they worked like men driven by a merciless dream to toil in an atmosphere of ice or flame" (92–93). And when it comes to confronting that "shadow of a man" (151) who is Jimmy, dying in the darkness, the same oscillating movement is reproduced and the same clinical distance preserved: "In the shadow of the fore rigging a dark mass stamped eddied, advanced, retreated. . . . They clustered round that moribund carcass, the fit emblem of their aspirations" (122). If a mimetic narrative puts readers in a position of proximity to Wait's interior feeling of depersonalization, a narrative diegesis is necessary to make us see these mimetic emotions from a critical distance. Put differently, a they-narrative that sets itself aside from this mimetic "we" is instrumental in conveying the internal (invisible) feelings of dissolution in an ocean of darkness via external (visible) images of darkness. We are told for instance that "the shadows of high waves swept with a running darkness the faces of men" (75). Or, "The black cluster of human forms reeled against the bulwark, back again towards the house. Shadowy figures could be seen tottering" (123). In short, if making us feel requires a degree of mimetic participation in the affect of the other, making us see requires a degree of diegetic distance in order to turn the interior language of felt affects into the exterior one of visible forms. The surrealist (mimetic) shadows that we are made to see from the outside are thus a representation of a (mimetic) fear of the dark experienced from the inside.

Now, since Conrad insists on the centrality of both affect and sight (that is, making us feel and making us see), we should not be surprised that in order to move from the interior to the exterior, the invisible to the visible, the one to the manifold, Conrad oscillates between mimetic and diegetic speech, affective participation and visual representation. We could thus say that on board that rocking narrative that is *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* recognition of the self in that

metaphysical ocean of darkness that surrounds it is predicated on an insight into the affective foundations of being, mimetic foundations that are intimately felt, to be sure, but are also aptly rendered visible through the elusive language of surrealist shadows. There is thus a sense in which this formal shift from diegesis to mimesis, distance to pathos, far from being representative of an aesthetic failure or indecision, mirrors at the level of the medium the mimetic ambivalence generated by the message. Mimesis, once again, haunts both the medium and the message of the tale.

We began this essay wondering how Conrad's poetics mediates from the many to the one, from the visible to the invisible, and we wanted to know what is at stake in the pervasive images of darkness in a novel ominously titled, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* My hope is that a surrealist account of mimesis attentive to both medium and the message of the tale offers a textually based solution to these fictional and metaphysical riddles. Schematically put, our mimetic hypothesis addressed three levels of experience. First, the emphasis on surrealist images of darkness expresses the narrative concern with a metaphysical anxiety of mimetic dissolution generated by the threat of physical annihilation. If Jimmy's actual death is in question throughout the narrative, the images of darkness that envelop him reveal what old Singleton sees all along, namely, that Wait, not unlike all of us, is just waiting to die—"'Why, of course he will die'" (42). Second, this anxiety is not simply personal and rooted in the physical threat of death but reveals the wider psychic dissolution of individuation that Caillois, following Janet, called psychasthenia, a fear of loss of identity that envelops everyone on board the *Narcissus* and that the tale, like many other of Conrad's narratives, attempts to reflect—via the surreal mirror of the sea. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, by stressing the mimetic continuity between figure and background, the phenomena and the essence, at the level of the message (mimetic logos), and by oscillating between mimetic and diegetic speech at the level of the medium (mimetic lexis), Conrad manages to give aesthetic form to an intimately felt, perhaps even secretly shared, experience that scientists, philosophers, and psychologists can only represent from without but that artists who are masters of their medium have the power to animate from within.

In his "Manifesto of Surrealism" André Breton famously offers a genealogy of writers who anticipate some of the major insights of surrealism. He proclaimed, for instance, that "Sade is surrealist in sadism," "Swift is surrealist in malice," "Poe is surrealist in his adventures," "Baudelaire is surrealist in morality," and so on (26–27). In an uncharacteristically generous mood, Breton left the list open for future critics and theorists to complete. After this detour through

the secret shadows that haunt *The Nigger of the "Narcissus*," we can perhaps propose a new candidate to add to this genealogy of surrealist precursors. This might be a timely moment to do so, espe-cially since the time of racialized/politicized readings of what lies at the "heart of darkness" has somewhat exhausted the controversial dimension characteristic of its initial impetus, and the shadow-line dividing images of Africa and images of Europe is no longer seen as being as clear-cut as it initially appeared to be.[26] Let us dare to look ahead, then, to future, imaginative readings of these darkly textured modernist tales and affirm that Conrad is a writer who is surrealist in his images of darkness.

"Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even unofficial Sentimen-talism," writes Conrad in the Preface, "all these gods must, after a short period of fellowship, abandon him" (xiv–xv), the artist who has taken it upon himself to supplement the scientist and the philoso-pher in the eternal quest for "what is enduring and essential" (xi). Indeed, Conrad's picture of darkness makes us see, with mimesis as a surreal "magical" mirror, a metaphysical anxiety that is deeply rooted in the immanence of the physical "senses" and "responsive emotions"—dark, tumultuous, and often conflicting emotions that emerge from the subject's confrontation with the haunting shadow of death. I have argued that mimesis is an effective device that al-lows Conrad to deftly move from the physical to the metaphysical, the particular to the universal, appearance to essence, and back. Perhaps it even allowed us to catch something of that "glimpse of truth" for which—thanks to Conrad's poetics of darkness—at least we didn't forget to ask.

Notes

This essay was originally presented at the Fifth International Conrad Conference in Lublin, Poland and is part of an ongoing book project on Conrad and mimetic theory provisionally titled, *Conrad's Secret Shadow: Mimesis, Catastrophe, Horrorism*. I wish to thank Keith Carabine and Hugh Epstein for reading a version of this essay and offering an initial assessment as well as valuable critiques. I am also grateful to the anonymous external readers for their comments and suggestions for further thought.

1. For an initial antagonistic philosophical critique of Conrad's Preface, see Goldknopf, "What's Wrong?" 54–56. On the side of Conrad, philo-sophically informed arguments have been offered by Miller, *Poets* 26–39, and Watt 76–88. For more recent accounts of the Preface, see Stockdale "Art of Language," and Johnsen, "To My Readers" 115–17.

2. This approach furthers a metaphysical line of inquiry opened up by J. Hillis Miller *Poets* 28; Foreword 6, Royal Roussel, *Metaphysics*, and Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, *Modern Temper*. It is also in line with a new philosophical turn in Conrad studies. See my edited *Conrad's* Heart of Darkness *and Contemporary Thought*.

3. For a psychological account of vanishing subjectivities in canonical modernists, see Ryan *The Vanishing Subject*; on the role of mimesis in the modernist dissolution of the ego, see Lawtoo, *The Phantom of the Ego*, especially chapter 2 devoted to Conrad.

4. The revival of interest in mimetic theory is informed by René Girard, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Jean Baudrillard, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe; it has important modernist predecessors in figures such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Roger Caillois. For an informed survey of the new turn in mimetic theory, see Potolsky 113–56. For an account of mimesis in literary and philosophical modernism, see Lawtoo, *The Phantom*. On Conrad and René Girard, see Johnsen; on Conrad and the Platonic conception of mimesis, see Lacoue-Labarthe, and Lawtoo, "The Horror." On the role of mimesis in Achebe's critique of Conrad, see Lawtoo "A Picture of Europe" and "A Picture of Africa." This essay furthers this emerging line of inquiry by considering the work of the French anthropologist and surrealist writer, Roger Caillois.

5. For an informed summary of the race debate on this novel, see Shaffer 58–61.

6. For critics who have explored the specular implications of the myth of Narcissus, see Torchiana 276–78, Burkman and Meloy 230–31. These readings emphasize the psychic (personal) or metropolitan (cultural) dimensions of this myth while I focus on the metaphysical (impersonal) implications of images of darkness as a "black mirror."

7. For an early account of how mimesis operates (or fails to operate) in Conrad's tale, see Foulke 308–13. For a more recent reading of mimesis that relies on René Girard's mimetic theory, see Johnsen.

8. For critics who have discussed Conrad's ontological affinities with Schopenhauer, see Ian Watt, *Conrad* 86–87 and 185–86 and Edward Said 65–68. Although the echoes between the artist and the philosopher are striking, my argument does not claim direct influence but, rather, traces the two authors' shared fascination for the ontological implications of images of darkness.

9. "Representation" would actually be a better translation of *Vorstellung*.

10. See also Schopenhauer's account of the sublime where he speaks of "Nature convulsed by a storm; the sky darkened by black threatening thunder clouds" (264) and of a "storm of tempestuous seas, where the mountain waves rise and fall" (265).

11. For a thorough introduction to Caillois's thought, see Frank 1–57; on the relation between ethnography and surrealism, see Clifford

92–114 and Caillois "Le surréalisme." On Caillois's general take on mimesis, see Potolsky 140–41. For a theoretical account of the role of mimicry in games that relies on Caillois's *Man, Play and Games*, see Iser 258–65. If Iser's "literary anthropology" persuasively argues that in recent years "literature has gained prominence as a mirror of human plasticity . . . propelled by the drive to gain shape," (xi) we shall see that for Caillois this mirror also reveals a human plasticity animated by a drive to lose shape and boundaries.

12. An abridged version of this article is included in *The Edge of Surrealism* 91–102. In what follows I refer to the extended French version. Translations are mine.

13. Caillois's objection to the evolutionary hypothesis is that some of these mimetic insects are actually inedible; or, alternatively, that disappearing against a given background (such as certain comestible plants) may actually diminish rather than increase, the chances of survival.

14. Janet defines "psychasthenia" as a "trouble in the apprehension of present reality, both with respect to perception and action" (*Névroses* 358). Characteristic symptoms include fatigue, vulnerability to emotions, loss of will, daydreaming, inability to act in the present, lack of self-confidence, and unfounded fears. For Janet's detailed account of psychasthenia, see his monumental *Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie* 260–442. For Janet's summary of his views on psychasthenia, see *Les Névroses* 349–67. For a concise and informed account of this pathology, see Jaspers 442.

15. Caillois is referring to Minkowski, *Le Temps Vécu* 382–98.

16. It is well-known that Jacques Lacan was initially close to surrealism; less known is that Caillois's account of psychasthenia directly informs Lacan's celebrated account of the mirror stage, providing him with a mimetic model for his own account of ego formation. Lacan writes: "But the facts of mimicry are no less instructive when conceived as cases of heteromorphic identification, in as much as they raise the problem of the significance of space for the living organism" (735–36). And he adds: "We have only to recall how Roger Caillois . . . illuminated the subject by using the term '*legendary psychasthenia*' to classify morphological mimicry as an obsession with space in its derealizing effects" (736).

17. Interestingly, in *Les Névroses* Pierre Janet claims that psychasthenia tends to affect imaginative characters (such as artists and philosophers) prone to shyness, social intimidation, and introversion. He also adds that it is often triggered by a sudden and repeated change of context and the need for adaption to new social environments (359). Surely, this is a description that not only applies to James Wait (an alienated, anxious, and withdrawn black subject among a foreign, intimidating, and often racist white crew). Up to a certain point, these symptomatic features also stretch to affect many other Conradian characters, from Marlow to Kurtz, Lord Jim to Nostromo, Mr.

Verloc to Mr. Razumov—even including Conrad himself (an imagina-
tive, foreign subject whose life was shaped by a constant process of
adaptation to the most strikingly different, potentially intimidating,
social backgrounds, and who repeatedly suffered from different forms
of psychic anxieties)—indicating that the shadow of psychasthenia
haunts the entirety of Conrad's mimetic corpus.

18. In his 1914 American Preface, Conrad confirmed this point: "In the
book [Wait] is nothing: he is merely the center of this ship's collec-
tive psychology" (ix).

19. These two levels of blackness (racial and metaphysical) do not sim-
ply operate independently, side by side; they are rather two sides
of the same coin, a Janus-faced coin that urges readers to adopt a
chameleon-like form of double-vision and look, simultaneously, both
to the physical and to the metaphysical side of darkness.

20. See for instance, Richardson 220.

21. David Manicom writes that "Conrad's unusual narrative strategies
. . . are essentially mimetic" (105). William Deresiewicz also adopts a
mimetic frame as he writes that "the drama within the page mirrors
the drama within the author" (214). Brian Richardson conversely
argues against a "mimetic poetics" that confines the narrative voice
to a real person and argues that Conrad's intention is "to mirror,
expressively, the crew's changing cohesion through the pronouns
used to denounce them" (219).

22. The image of the mirror as an explanatory model of mimesis is in-
troduced only at the end of the *Republic*, in Book 10.

23. Diegesis, writes Plato in *Republic*, is a narrative mode whereby the
"poet himself is the speaker and does not even attempt to suggest
that anyone else but himself is the speaker" (637), whereas in mime-
sis as in tragedy, "the poet delivers a speech as if he were someone
else . . . assimilating thereby his own diction as far as possible to
that of the person whom he announces as about to speak" (638).

24. On Lacoue-Labrthe, Conrad, and mimesis, see J. Hillis Miller's and my
own interventions in *Conrad's* Heart of Darkness *and Contemporary
Thought*.

25. As David Manicom puts it, the narrator "imitates his perception of
fabula rather than imitating normal artistic standards of consistency
in perspective" (105).

26. See Lawtoo, "A Picture of Europe" and "A Picture of Africa."

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───. "A Picture of Europe: Possession Trance in *Heart of Darkness.*" *Novel* 45.3 (2012): 409–32.

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