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Conrad and Coppola: Different Centres of Darkness

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When a great artist in one medium produces a work based on a masterpiece in the same or another medium, we can expect interesting results. Not only will the new work be assessed as to its merits and validity as a separate creation, but the older work will also inevitably be reassessed as to its own durability, or relevance to the new age. I am not here concerned with mere adaptations, however complex and exciting they may be, such as operas like *Othello*, *Falstaff* and *Beatrice et Benedict*, or plays like *The Innocents* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. What I am discussing is a thorough reworking of the original material so that a new, independent work emerges; what happens, for example, in the many Elizabethan and Jacobean plays based on Roman, Italian and English stories, or in plays like *Eurydice*, *Antigone* and *The Family Reunion*, which reinterpret the ancient Greek myths in modern terms. In the cinema, in many ways the least adventurous of the creative arts, we have been inundated by adaptations, some so remote from the original works as to be, indeed, new works in their own right, but so devoid of any merit that one cannot begin to discuss them seriously. But from time to time an intelligent and independent film has been fashioned from the original material. At the moment I can recall only the various film treatments of Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*. But now, in Francis Coppola's recent Vietnam war film, *Apocalypse Now*, based on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we have a worthy addition to this category which may well set the standard by which all other cinematic re-creations will henceforth be judged.

Conrad's novella, one hardly needs reminding, is the account of a journey from Brussels to the heart of the Congo which partially resembles one made by Conrad himself in 1890. His narrator, Marlow, employed by a colonial company to captain a river steamboat, sails in a steamer down the west coast of Africa to the mouth of the Congo, then continues in a smaller boat to a town thirty miles higher up the river (Matadi), from which he travels overland to the Central Station (the town of Kinchasa at Stanley Pool) and finally into the heart of darkness to the Inner Station (at Stanley Falls). The novella soon becomes a series of impressionistic vignettes exposing the brutalities of colonial, and particularly Belgian colonial rule. In 'the city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre' (Brussels) Marlow is given his commission, in a house with 'grass sprouting between the stones' guarded by two sinister women who 'knitted black wool feverishly.' Down the coast of Africa he passes a French man-of-war subduing a native rebellion; 'In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent.' More vivid impressions await him in the town thirty miles up-river. 'I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass,' 'an undersized railway truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air ... as dead as the carcass of some animal.' A chain-gang of emaciated blacks passes him; he nearly falls into 'a vast, artificial hole . . . the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine;' he enters a grove like 'the gloomy circle of some Inferno,' in which 'black shadows of disease and starvation' are slowly dying. On the overland route to the Central Station there are 'paths, paths, everywhere; 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; and a solitude, a solitude, nobody, not a hut.' Marlow passes 'several abandoned villages' and hears the beat of far-off drums at night, 'a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild. . . .' After fifteen days he arrives at the Central Station, where the exposure of colonialism continues. The Company's agents wander 'here and there with . . . absurd long

staves in their hands like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence,' and finally a band called the Eldorado Exploring Expedition passes through; To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.' The cumulative power of these impressions is intensified when counterpointed by the theme of the mysterious Mr. Kurtz, the agent of the Inner Station, who is first mentioned in the up-river town. As Marlow proceeds on his journey Kurtz grows in mystery and grandeur, his gigantic 'singleness of purpose' condemning the sordid selfishness of the other colonial agents. At the Central Station Marlow is told that he will have to take his boat to the Inner Station and bring back Kurtz, who is very sick. As he proceeds to the heart of the 'mighty big river . . . resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country and its tail lost in the depths of the land,' Marlow broods over the 'strange rumours' of Kurtz's unorthodox behaviour, which fascinates him as it embarrasses everyone else. And so the novella moves to its climax, with Kurtz gradually engulfing the atrocities of the other agents in his own immense horror.

Coppola's film is similarly structured. His narrator, Captain Willard, on leave from the battlefield, is given his mission at the very beginning of the film, to locate and eliminate the famous Colonel Kurtz who, after murdering four South Vietnamese officers under his command, has taken his men over the border into Cambodia, where they are indiscriminately killing Vietcong, South Vietnamese and Cambodians. This is 'totally beyond the pale of any acceptable conduct,' Willard is told. And so he journeys up the Nung, 'a river which [like the Congo] snakes across the land like a main circuit cable' to the border and beyond, studying Colonel Kurtz's dossier en route while a vast panorama of the Vietnam war unrolls before him. In the first episode he meets the eccentric Colonel Kilgore who refuses to let the war interfere with his favourite sport, surfing. Kilgore (the syllables taken separately describe the man) is prepared to attack a Vietcong-controlled village at the mouth of the Nung river not really because Willard and his boat need to get through but because the waves at that point have a six-foot peak which is ideal for surfing. In the film's most memorable scene the village is attacked by helicopters flying to the music of 'The Ride of the Valkyries' and demolished by napalm bombs as Kilgore's boys ride the nearby surf. 'I love the smell of napalm in the morning,' Kilgore says wistfully. 'It smells . . . like . . . victory.' In other episodes Willard encounters a tiger in the jungle while looking for mangoes, attends a striptease show for thousands of GI's which abruptly ends when the soldiers rush onto the stage to manhandle the artistes, meets another boat the occupants of which are searched for weapons and massacred in a moment of panic, arrives at the furthest point in Vietnam, 'the arsehole of the world,' where a demoralised group of GI's rebuild a bridge every morning which the Vietcong demolish every night, and finally penetrates into Cambodia where, in an attack on the boat by Kurtz's followers, two of the crew are killed, one of them, the helmsman, by an arrow through his body. And, as in the novella, between these episodes, Willard continues reading Kurtz's dossier and allows the Colonel's personality to penetrate and absorb his own.

Throughout the journey other, minor parallels to the novella occur. Willard is told that an earlier passenger on the boat blew his brains out; in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow's predecessor Fresleven was killed by natives, and a former passenger on the little steamer to Matadi hanged himself because of the sun 'or the country perhaps.' The attack on the boat by Kurtz's men and the manner of the helmsman's death are common to the novella and the film. The press photographer whom Willard meets in Colonel Kurtz's camp speaks almost exactly like the Russian Marlow meets in Mr. Kurtz's Station. 'He made me see things—things. . . . Now—just to give you an idea—I don't mind telling you, he wanted to shoot me too one day;' the words are Conrad's but, in content and rhythm, might just as well have come from Coppola's script. The two Kurtzes, especially, often act and speak alike. Both have asked to be sent to their assignment; both are impressively bald (surely a symbolic touch); both are happy with the agent sent to end their jungle existence. 'I was to have the care of his memory,' says Marlow in words almost identical with those Colonel Kurtz uses when he asks Willard to represent him faithfully to his son in America. When the manager of the Central Station complains that Kurtz's method is 'unsound,' Marlow asks, 'Do you . . . call it "unsound method?" ' 'Without doubt,' he [exclaims] hotly. 'Don't you?' . . . 'No

method at all/ Marlow murmurs. In the film Colonel Kurtz asks pointedly, 'Are my methods unsound?' And Willard replies, 'I don't see any method, sir.' Later, another comment, 'But his soul was mad,' is repeated by the photographer in the film, 'The man's clear in his mind but his soul is mad.' Eventually Marlow hazily explains what happened to Mr. Kurtz. 'There was nothing either above or below him—and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces.' The laconic Willard puts it more simply, 'He broke from all that [human society], and then he broke away from himself.' In both novella and film, Kurtz is little more than a voice (in the film he is barely visible), which instructs Marlow-Willard for some days and finally expires after muttering the now famous last words.

So much for the similarities between the novella and the film. They are numerous—the same 'story' and structure, and some parallel characters, incidents and expressions. It is strange, therefore, not to find Conrad's name among the film's credit titles. But *Apocalypse Now* is also a work of art in its own right, and from the beginning this too is apparent, despite the resemblances to *Heart of Darkness*. The steamboat which takes Willard up the Nung river is far more important than the boat which Marlow captains from the Central to the Inner Station. Coppola's riverboat is a modern Ship of Fools and its four-man crew, two blacks and two whites, the helmsman, the clown, the coward and the sportsman are innocents caught in a conflict they know nothing about. In *Heart of Darkness*, apart from Marlow, no one develops or elicits our sympathy, as distinct from our liking. In the film, however, there is some development of character. The helmsman Philips becomes increasingly hostile towards Willard till, at the moment of death, he tries to strangle him. The other black, Clean, is friendly and carefree, and his death, while listening to a tape of his mother pleading with him to come back home in one piece, is the film's most poignant moment. The coward, Chef, also develops; shattered by his encounter with a tiger early in the film and still frightened when he has to search another boat for weapons, he has, by the end, gained enough courage to stand by Willard in his encounter with Kurtz. If Lance, the surfer is less alive than the others, it is because he is intended to be the shallowest personality of the four. Thus two perspectives of the Vietnam War are offered in the film—the events seen from the riverboat and the life of the characters on that boat.

But it is only at the climax, when Marlow and Willard confront Kurtz, that *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* part company and develop differently. I think we must be specific, if we are to appreciate Conrad's novella fully, as to the nature of Kurtz's ultimate degradation, which can only be hinted at but never bluntly stated. Identifying it correctly will also enable us to defend Conrad's style against F. R. Leavis' famous accusation, that the "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery" has a muffling rather than a magnifying effect. We remember, of course, that there is much excessively colourful writing in Conrad's earliest novels, *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*. But in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* he had shown his ability to write more directly and powerfully when his subject required it. Is the gross over-writing of *Heart of Darkness* then a backward step, or did *that* subject demand *that* particular style? The vagueness and 'adjectival insistence' are found mainly in Marlow's descriptions of 'darkness' and of Kurtz's degradation. 'Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own.' Kurtz presides 'at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which—as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times—were offered up to him—do you understand?—to Mr. Kurtz himself.' Kurtz would go on long expeditions; 'mostly his expeditions had been for ivory;' he would 'disappear for weeks; forget himself amongst these people—forget himself—you know.' When Marlow eventually identifies the 'round carved balls' on posts before Kurtz's station as human heads, he makes his most revealing comment, 'They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence.' That Kurtz massacred the natives, stole ivory and was worshipped as a god are all bluntly stated by Marlow. What then could he do beyond these things that, in 1899 (when Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*) Marlow could only allude

to as 'unspeakable rites' and 'various lusts'? Surely we are meant to conclude that Kurtz, who set out for Africa carrying the light of European civilization at its brightest, came face to face, like other post-Darwinian heroes before him, with the essential animal nature of man, over which civilization is mere clothing, and that then, with his typical ruthless honesty, he cast off his ideals and humanity and dared to live at the other extreme, as the total animal Darwin and the Naturalists said he really was; he tore down the facade behind which the other colonialists sheltered, and converted metaphor into brutal fact, not only devouring Africa, as they did, but, very specifically, devouring Africans. It is this 'horror' that cannot be directly stated but which, disguised behind the most impressive and justified verbiage in Conrad's works, provides a fitting climax to the earlier colonial brutalities and also gives *Heart of Darkness* that mysterious grandeur which has fascinated so many readers. And this is the tragedy of Kurtz. Daring to face the consequences of his nature, he loses his identity; unable to be totally beast and never again able to be fully human, he alternates between trying to return to the jungle and recalling in grotesque terms his former idealism. 'Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh, he struggled, he struggled. . . . The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the hollow sham whose fate it was to be buried presently in the mould of primeval earth. But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotions, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power.' Inevitably Kurtz collapses, his last words epitomizing his experience. The horror! The horror!

There are a few human heads in Colonel Kurtz's camp in Cambodia—but they do not seem to be particularly important. Certainly they are not as conspicuous as the dozens of complete dead bodies lying around. Colonel Kurtz's problem is basically a military one, for *Apocalypse Now*, we must remember, is a film about war, not colonization. Colonel Kurtz had been an ideal commander, destined to rise in the military hierarchy, till an event occurred which altered his whole life. Sent to supervise the inoculation of children in a village, he was horrified to learn that the Vietcong later broke in and cut off every inoculated arm. Colonel Kurtz then faced his own darkness, that a war can be fought successfully only *if* one learns to come to terms with 'horror and moral terror' ('Horror and moral terror must be your friends,' he tells Willard); one can win *if* one eliminates all human feeling in favour of total ruthlessness. Colonel Kurtz has accepted the challenge of the 'if'. (He had revealed to the news photographer that 'if is the middle word of 'life'.) Unlike the other commanders who hypocritically claim they are fighting for the preservation of civilization while annihilating whole villages by napalm bombs, Kurtz has bravely cast off the trappings of civilization and turned himself and his men into pure fighting machines. He can therefore rightly boast that he is beyond the timid, lying morality of his colleagues. As the news photographer explains to Willard, there are no 'fractions' (that is, mingled emotions) in Kurtz's make-up; there is only the totality of love or hate. Willard can appreciate this because, earlier in the film, after the accident that killed all the natives in a boat suspected of carrying hidden weapons, he had commented sadly, 'We cut them up with guns and then give them a band aid.' By the time he reaches Kurtz, Willard is convinced that the American army in Vietnam is totally confused in its motives, while Kurtz is admirably if insanely single-minded in his actions. As early as the Kilgore episode Willard had noted, 'If that's how Kilgore fought the war, I wonder what they had against Kurtz.' And so he determines to decide for himself whether to kill Kurtz or join him, which in fact is what his predecessor had done.

Kurtz, however, has other plans for Willard; that is why he has allowed him to reach his camp alive. Like his namesake in *Heart of Darkness* he has discovered that the consequence of rejecting his humanity to live and fight like an animal is that life has become meaningless and empty. He has faced the challenge of darkness only to be engulfed by it. At this point Coppola introduces into his film the anthropomorphic theories of Sir J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Jessie Weston's persuasive though irritatingly repetitive *From Ritual to Romance*, and T. S. Eliot's *Poems*, books which we see, like signposts, in Kurtz's library. Indeed Coppola makes him read *The Hollow Men* to stress the point. Kurtz is now the sick god of his tribe, that notorious bore the Fisher King, and he desperately needs the Quester

to execute him and free his paralysed people.' So Willard is carefully groomed for this role which he finally enacts. Some facile symbolism prepares us for the denouement. Early in the film a chaplain conducts a holy communion service on the battlefield while the camera mounts to take in a helicopter overhead with a cow dangling from it. In the very next scene Kilgore and his men dine off the roasted beast. This intrusive symbol of the scapegoat dying for the life of the community is repeated at the end of the film when Willard executes Kurtz at the same moment that Kurtz's soldiers kill another animal in a ritual ceremony. But Willard does not become Kurtz's successor. Instead he sails away, leaving Kurtz's men to be wiped out by an airstrike from Saigon which we know is imminent. This attack probably was to have been the noisy ending Coppola at one time envisaged for his film. Fortunately he preferred a quieter one; now, as Willard's boat moves downstream, we hear Kurtz's final words again. The horror! The horror!

This excursion into anthropomorphism accounts for another significant difference between *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*. In the novella, as I have already mentioned, there is an increase in tension and interest when we move from the atrocities of the colonialists to the mysterious evil world of Kurtz. This is because, whether it is narrating action or reporting speech, the novel comes to us through the medium of words, words which can be equally exciting as vehicles of action or description. In *Heart of Darkness* the vague and massive words which present Kurtz's evil are more impressive and exciting, because of what they hide, than the precise words which describe the colonial atrocities earlier on. The reader moves willingly from the evil he understands to the evil he can only guess at. On the screen, however, there is a greater gulf between action and speech, for the former comes to us directly, as in real life, without needing words to convey it. We see, and we do not need to be told. Consequently a first viewing of *Apocalypse Now* can be a bewildering, even exhausting experience. For we suddenly realize that here is a film which begins with considerable action and then declines steadily towards the slow, muted final episode in Kurtz's camp. Has something gone wrong with the planning? Has Kilgore, brilliantly played by Robert Duvall, struck us so forcibly with his lunacy that nothing afterwards is as exciting? Or is this movement from action to discussion, from noise to virtual silence deliberate on Coppola's part? When we consider Coppola's rejection of Conrad's cannibal climax in favour of a rather clumsily contrived ritual sacrifice, the answer becomes clear. *Apocalypse Now* is designed from the first to move towards extinction. Of course the lunacy of Kilgore and the other commanders is more terrifying than Kurtz's comparatively rational solution to the problem of warfare. It is far more sickening to see supposedly civilized men burning whole villages without any qualms than to see declared savages killing each other. In a taped message to his colleagues Kurtz taunts them, 'What do they call it when the assassins accuse the assassin?' What he accomplishes in the film is to strip them of their grotesque facade of civilization, to embody in himself the spirit of pure, uncompromising warfare, and then bravely to submit to the inevitable resulting emptiness. If you want war, then fight it thoroughly, and this is what will happen to you. It can only end in a longing for extinction. With Kurtz dies his army and, by implication, all warmongers. In this sense he is fully the scapegoat, dying not that others may live but that they may see that they too must follow him into destruction. Rarely has a work of art appeared in any medium which moves so steadily and daringly from life to death.² And of a new world emerging from the old, there is not the slightest hint.

There remains one major difference between *Apocalypse Now* and its source. So far, the *Heart of Darkness* we have been describing could have been written by any pessimistic novelist at the end of the last century, one may even insist, by any novelist except Joseph Conrad. For what makes a novel a Conrad novel is the presence in it of the Conrad hero, that powerful moral force struggling for survival in a disintegrating world. By 1900 perceptive thinkers had long predicted the chaos to come, the breakdown of established religious, political and social systems which our century has experienced. But at that time 'the centre' still held. Darwinism, Marxism and anarchism may have eaten into the framework of society but outwardly the churches and empires stood as strong as ever. The most advanced writers only warned of the coming desolation and each was able to offer a personal solution to the catastrophe. For Conrad the

world may be falling to pieces but the individual hero can remain intact, a moral force personified. Whether he survives or dies, he is true to himself, and his integrity is a kind of triumph. *Heart of Darkness* has two typical Conrad heroes, three if we accept the chief accountant at the up-river station. Perhaps we should. He is not a moral character but Marlow 'respected the fellow. Yes. I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy, but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character.' The Russian who owns the book *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship* is clearly a Conrad hero. 'For months—for years—his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase—and there he was gallantly, thoughtlessly alive, ;g all appearance indestructible solely by the virtue of his few years and of his unreflecting audacity. I was reduced into something like admiration—like envy. . . . If the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth.' It is Marlow, however, who provides the answer to Kurtz and the colonialists. The latter are clearly despicable; Kurtz is admirable in his original idealism and his daring to abandon it and live according to what he conceives to be his true nature; but for Marlow there is a better way. 'You wonder I didn't go ashore for a howl and a dance? Well, no—I didn't. Fine sentiments, you say? Fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time. I had to mess about with white-lead and strips of woollen blanket helping to put bandages on those leaky steam-pipes—I tell you.' 'The earth for us is a place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells too, by Jove!—breathe dead hippo so to speak and not be contaminated. . . . [Y]our strength comes in, the faith in your ability for the digging of unostentatious holes to bury the stuff in—your power of devotion not to yourself but to an obscure, back-breaking business.' Throughout the novella Marlow insists on the power of efficiency, doing the job one is paid for to the best of one's ability, as a means of conquering darkness. Towser or Towson, the author of the manual on seamanship had demonstrated this. 'Not a very enthralling book, but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work which made these humble pages . . . *luminous with another than a professional light*' (emphasis added). If *Heart of Darkness* is, as some critics claim, an account of an exploration conducted by Marlow into the heart of man, from his *superego* through the *ego* into the *id*, then its conclusion is that man can surmount the bestiality of the *id* by finding order and integrity within himself (the *ego*) and demonstrating this by worthwhile and responsible action (the *superego*). Indeed, for many critics, *Heart of Darkness* is about Marlow the saved, not Kurtz the damned; it is the story of how to survive the approaching horror.

But *Heart of Darkness* has another positive force than its heroes. Enveloping the horror of Kurtz is the Congo Free State of Leopold II, totally corrupt though to all appearances established to last for a long time. But beyond this travesty of colonial enlightenment, mightier and nobler in every way, is the British Empire, for Conrad the best government the world had ever seen. On the map Marlow sees in the Brussels office 'there was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time because one knows that some real work is done there.' In the novella the British Empire still stands firm, testifying to man's ability to conquer darkness with a workable system. Marlow is concerned to remind his British audience on the cruising yawl *Nellie* that their empire came out of darkness and must always struggle to remain free of it. Thus, in 1900, all is not yet lost. 'If England to itself do rest but true' and continues to produce heroes, there is some hope for mankind against the imminent catastrophe.

In the 1970's no such illusions are admissible. No responsible artist would dare to advocate the U.S.A. or any other country as the answer to today's chaotic world. Arguably too, the established religions have also failed. But it comes as a shock to realize that Coppola, an American director, cannot even offer us the traditional American hero, that seemingly imperishable if necessarily 'renewed' Adam, who is always turning up in American books and films, in Vietnam itself only a year ago as the Deer Hunter. In *Apocalypse Now* there are no safe frameworks—no noble nation, no valid faith, no pioneers. The riverboat is a ship of fools, not heroes. The self-reliant Russian of the novella has become the sycophantic news photographer drugged by Kurtz's ideas. And Willard is no Marlow. At the very beginning he says. 'There is no way of telling his [Kurtz's] story without telling my own, and if his story is a confession, so is my own.' What he means is that his personality has been absorbed into Kurtz's till he is fashioned into a

tool, the necessary executioner and guardian of his victim's reputation. Critics who berated the actor Martin Sheen for portraying Willard as a mere puppet missed the point of the role. In a film enacting the extinction of a ruthless colonel and his army, and therefore the extinction of all warmongers and their armies, Willard is Everyman, ourselves, deprived of our individuality till we are mere instruments of higher powers. We are clearly meant to identify with Willard, to see with his eyes and think his thoughts; and the great shock of the film is that this journey on the river of human nature leads us with Willard into the hollow heart of Colonel Kurtz. In Coppola's film, unlike Conrad's novella, there is only the darkness. What the novelist warned against and in some measure provided for has arrived. We are in the great Last Day of the Apocalypse.

Heart of Darkness has withstood the test of time. It endures and will probably always endure. Of its age, it speaks to all ages which, in a nutshell, are surely the essentials of a great work of art. It may be too soon to pronounce definitely on *Apocalypse Now*. In this discussion I have not been concerned to review it purely as a film and will not therefore deal with its many other merits, especially the cinematography—for once an Oscar was intelligently awarded. Is it a masterpiece or, as most critics seem to think, *almost* a masterpiece? Certainly it is an impressive film by any standards. But I think we can already confidently assert that, whatever its eventual stature, in two respects at least, its extraordinary structure and its total commitment to today's reality, Coppola's film is worthy to stand as 'a new creation' beside the Conrad novella from which it derives.