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EVOLUTION OF ETHICS IN *THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU* AND *HEART OF DARKNESS*

by

CHRISTINE ANLICKER

Under the Direction of Dr. Marilynn Richtarik

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau and* Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* within the context of nineteenth-century evolutionary theory. I explore how Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley used evolution by natural selection to develop differing explanations of the origins of ethics and how this impacted the place each scientist gave morality in civilization. By exploring how Huxley and Darwin understood morality to derive from the phenomena of sympathy and restrain, I illustrate how Wells's and Conrad's novellas interrogate these discourses of altruism.

INDEX WORDS: Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, H. G. Wells, The Island of Doctor Moreau, Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley, Evolution, Ethics, Man's place in nature

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CHRISTINE ANLICKER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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2012

EVOLUTION OF ETHICS IN *THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU* AND *HEART OF DARKNESS*

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August 2012

Dedication

Mom, Dad, and Katherine—because of your love, faith, and support I have tread closer to my dreams than I could have hoped to on my own. Thank you for believing in me.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my thesis director, Dr. Marilynn Richtarik. With her encouragement and patient guidance, I have exceeded what I thought possible for myself as a scholar. I am also grateful to Dr. Michael Galchinsky and Dr. LeeAnne Richardson for their insights during this process.

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1 Introduction

Nineteenth-century evolutionary theory figures prominently in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1896 and 1899 respectively. Wells's and Conrad's novellas navigate the territory of being human that had been re-charted by evolution earlier in the century. Evolution is popularly conceived to be synonymous with Charles Darwin, yet evolution's genesis and, more specifically, Darwinism's were abetted by more scientists than the eponymous one. In particular, Thomas Henry Huxley's work helped to spread the concept of evolution through natural selection to the general public. In their application of this concept to human beings, both scientists address similar issues concerning civilization's institution of behavioral demands on humanity. However, Darwin and Huxley arrive at different conclusions regarding altruism's relationship to the development of human beings and its place in civilization. This subtle friction between how these two prominent scientists regarded ethics in an evolutionary landscape reverberated in the popular imagination to influence Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*

The traditional characterization of Thomas Huxley as Darwin's loyal friend and tenacious advocate raises the question of how Huxley's lectures and publications might diverge from Darwin's work. However, historians of science have observed that "judging Huxley only in relation to Darwin does an injustice not only to Huxley, but also to the history of biological science" (Lyons 50). Although careful to emphasize his support of Darwin, Huxley found himself at times on the defense, claiming that: "the assertion which I sometimes meet with nowadays, that I have 'recanted' or changed my opinions about Mr. Darwin's views, is quite unintelligible to me" (*Darwiniana* vi). The need Huxley felt to certify his Darwinian credentials suggests the presence

of divergent facets in Huxley's work, and the necessity of a closer scholarly examination. Historians such as Peter Bowler argue for a re-classification of Huxley as "pseudo-Darwinian" on the basis that "it now appears that Huxley was interested in selection only as a *possible* mechanism of evolution, a hypothesis that allowed the general idea of descent to become respectable" (76). Although I do not go to the extreme of labeling Huxley a "pseudo-Darwinian," I re-examine Huxley's reputation as a naturalist and biologist in his own right and demonstrate the ways in which his rhetoric both reiterates and diverges from Darwin's. While these historians have focused on the scientific issues, my analysis attends to how Huxley places ethics in his articulation of the intersection of man and the natural world. Huxley reconceptualizes sympathy, a concept Darwin introduces in the *Descent of Man* as one of many internal drives, as a restraint on man's competitive instinct. Both scientists view a human being's capability for sympathetic interaction as the foundation of morality, yet they differ in their description of its role in civilization and the importance of community to ethical action.

The discussion of evolutionary ethics in Huxley's major works sets a biological precedent for English Imperial expansion. Although Huxley replaces religion with scientific evidence and humanism, he maintains the status quo of "civilized" man's supremacy within the global hierarchy, followed by "savages" and finally apes. His book *Man's Place in Nature,* published in 1863, argues for the recognition of anatomical similarities between human beings and the great apes. However, in his Romanes Lecture, "Evolution and Ethics," and its Prolegomena, published in 1894, Huxley maintains human supremacy, especially that of the male European. These two texts are among Huxley's most cited works in humanities scholarship. My analysis focuses on these texts, along with *Darwiniana,* a collection of his early articles, in combination with Darwin's *The Descent of Man.* These works represent the authors' major attempts to delineate the

boundaries of what being human entails within evolutionary terms by the concepts of "sympathy" and "restraint".

There is an established historical connection between Huxley and Wells that substantiates Huxley's influence on Wells's work. During his time as a student, Wells studied biology under Huxley, and he deliberately inserts Huxley into the world of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* with Prendick's assertion to Dr. Moreau that: "I had spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some research in biology under Huxley" (29). Wells's overt engagement with Huxley and science more generally has caused some scholars to observe that "his brilliant scientific fantasies were essentially simpler than *Heart of Darkness*, both in their narrative strategies and in their treatment of scientific and social themes" (Patrick McCarthy 59). Critics have used Wells's portrayal of evolutionary theory and biology to read the novel as if Wells was merely regurgitating Huxley's theories. I will resist an understanding of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* as simple and instead demonstrate how the underlying interactions of nineteenth-century evolutionary discourses invite a reading of the novel as dissecting Huxley's notion of sympathy.

Wells's examination of the relationship between humanity and sympathetic, moral behavior is reflected in Conrad's more understated appropriation of evolutionary discourse through the text's preoccupation with the concept of 'restraint.' Allan Hunter indicates Conrad's concern that "without restraint society is fragmented, internally at war—it seems that this is the first term in the long line of development that leads to civilization…*this* is the term Huxley should be examining" (*Joseph Conrad* 119). Hunter suggests that, in *Heart of Darkness*, the conscience is synonymous with the idea of restraint (*Joseph Conrad* 118). Prior criticism has been preoccupied with the psychological and cultural friction between science and nineteenth-century ethics. However, Huxley and Darwin both attempted to stretch their theories of evolution, which seem

to predict the survival of those who act out of self-interest, to account for the altruistic behavior privileged by societal mores. Marlow's journey through the Congo accentuates how the resulting conflict between societal- and self-restraints, predicated on sympathetic interpersonal relations, and selfish instincts endowed by nature is inseparable from existing as a human being. While I agree with Hunter about the significance of "restraint" as an area of critical inquiry, this paper explicates the multiplicity of meanings the word acquires throughout the text when considered more precisely within the frame of evolutionary discourse.

Conrad and Wells problematize evolution's relationship with ethics. Wells's novella does so by disconnecting his narrator from not only his fellow characters but also his author and audience. If, as Huxley and Darwin argue, ethical behavior is founded on the ability of individuals to relate to one another, then this type of interaction is precluded in Wells's tale. Similarly, Conrad explores the issue of sympathy within literature, suggesting a more expansive definition that does not exclude native Africans as Huxley and Darwin do. Scholars contemporary to the discussion and since have entangled the language of Darwinism and evolutionary theory with the discourse of Imperialism. In "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley employs the language of colonization to describe the relationship of civilization to the surrounding world of nature. Thus, the counterbalance of restraint against competition was understood by him to influence not only individual interactions but also interactions at the national and international levels. A more complex understanding of how *Heart of Darkness* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* engage with evolutionary theory will yield a more intricate understanding of how their authors conceptualized the British Empire.

2 Thomas Huxley's Place in Evolutionary Theory

Critics analyzing the impact of evolutionary theory on late nineteenth-century literature habitually claim that Charles Darwin's influence "calls into question 'man's supremacy over the earth' which is directly derived from Adam's divine installment as master over nature and confirmed by the qualities peculiar to man: speech, reason and free will, the traditional difference markers separating humans from animals" (Richter 3). Although these claims dramatize how Darwin sparked a revolution in Victorian thought, they emphasize a polemical perspective on the evolutionary debate. Those who make them fail to appreciate how the author of the *Origin of Species* and its popularizers attempted to maintain the ethical status quo and the notion of humankind's dominion over the earth within the intellectual construct of evolution by natural selection. Thomas Henry Huxley's vehement support of his friend and colleague, Darwin, has led literary and scientific scholars to understand his work only as popularizing Darwinism. However, recent scientific efforts have highlighted several points where Huxley differed significantly from Darwin regarding evolution. As a prolific lecturer to the general public and a politician, Huxley's thoughts were influential outside the bounds of the scientific community. Huxley's two seminal works demonstrate that, throughout his career, he saw morality as determined independently of the biological origins of humanity. His argument that man's place in the cosmos rose from nature while opposing nature's course is a valuable point of reference for examining the internal conflicts of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *Heart of Darkness.*

Demonstrating how Huxley's views transgressed the framework of Darwinism necessitates an examination of what Darwinism as a theoretical and critical term means. Such a question is complicated, since "Darwinism" is a highly contested term. In his deconstruction of "Darwinism," James Moore argues that in order to understand the word fully, we must under-

stand "the way in which the meaning of 'Darwinism' was socially dependent" (364). Moore argues for an understanding of "Darwinism" in terms of its social and use value, a strategy at odds with that of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines "Darwinism" as: "The biological theory of Charles Darwin concerning the evolution of species, etc., set forth especially in his works entitled 'The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life' (1859), and 'The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex' (1871)" (OED). The *OED's* definition overlooks how the term's meaning evolved through cultural use during Darwin's lifetime and after by giving Darwin sole possession of the term and focusing on only two of Darwin's many publications. However, the term historically had a much wider frame of reference than this definition implies. For example, scientists such as Alfred Russel Wallace published texts with the word "Darwinism" in the title. Indeed, Huxley coined the term "Darwinism" while defending *The Origin of Species* in periodical publications to distinguish *his* interpretation of what Darwin meant from his own views.

For the sections that follow, which analyze *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *Heart of Darkness*, I draw on the *OED's* definition and align "Darwinism" with the concepts of evolution through natural selection and descent with modification. In the following discussion of Huxley's "Evolution and Ethics," I argue that the lecture rejects Darwinism as a description for the operation of ethics and consequentially, daily life within civilization. However, literary scholarship has employed a different definition of Darwinism and as a result, understood Huxley's ethical stance differently. Of the literary scholars I examined, John Glendening offers the most extensive in-text account of his understanding of the term and acknowledges the multiple late-Victorian understandings of Darwinism. Glendening recognizes the existence of multiple Darwinisms and acknowledges that "Darwinism" is a term with a social as well as theoretical

significance. However, his book is entitled *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels,* while his subsequent focus is on "Darwinism." With meager acknowledgement of the alternative theories encompassed by the much broader field of evolution, Glendening seems to collapse the distinction between evolution and Darwinism that Huxley and Joseph Hooker, another member of Darwin's cadre, were careful to make. Since Glendening's readings attempt to historicize texts such as *Heart of Darkness* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* within the spread of Darwin's theory, the dismissal of the history of science in his actual analyses becomes problematic.

Popular accounts of the historical events leading to the "Darwinian Revolution" participate in cleaving Darwinian theory to the larger Victorian concern of evolution. Respected evolutionary scholars, such as Stephen J. Gould, have attempted to contravene lone hero narratives of the genesis of "Darwinism." Gould refutes the popular mythology that depicts Charles Darwin's expedition on the *HMS Beagle* as an Odyssey-like adventure that resulted in a moment of epiphany en route and, upon his return, the subsequent publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Instead, Gould chronicles the collaborative ordeal of composing the work, as opposed to the legend of "a young man, freed from the trammels of English society and constraining presuppositions, face to face with nature, parrying his fresh and formidable mind with all the challenges provided by plants, animals, and rocks throughout the globe" (*Ever Since Darwin* 347-48). Darwin's Creationist convictions initially inhibited his understanding of the significance of his findings. Only after Darwin worked extensively with the eminent scientists Richard Owen and John Gould (no relation to Stephen J.) was he able to arrive at a satisfactory analysis of the specimens he gathered from the Galapagos Islands.

Gould presents this evidence debunking the Western individualist myth of the solitary genius to argue that "creativity is not an escape from culture but a unique use of its opportunities combined with a clever end run around its constraints" (*Ever Since Darwin* 359). Gould's notion of the tendency in European culture to perceive humanity as fettered by communal obligations echoes Marlow's evocation in *Heart of Darkness* of a time before modern civilization when man's feet were untrammeled, free to take him anywhere. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* Prendick also imagines himself moored by conventions contingent on his upper-class social position, although early in his narrative he experiences his removal from the network of social obligations as a loss of freedom. The tendency to establish a false binary of lone creative genius versus stagnant cultural communities is perpetuated in the tendency of critics of these two works to find, and juxtapose within their analyses, the theme of scientific creativity versus culture. This sense of the individual as possessing a superior quality that enables astounding feats of insight becomes even more interesting when considered within the context of what Darwin and, to a greater extent, Huxley posit as the defining feature of what it means to be human: altruistic social interaction.

Examining Darwin's influence in the context of the intellectual and social communities he participated in reveals how popular understanding of his theory has shifted its attention away from the point of evolution through natural selection. The publication of the *Origin of Species* is often used to mark the beginning of the "Darwinian Revolution." However, as in any military endeavor, forces had been gathering and engaging in small-scale sparring matches prior to its publication. Although this history is commonly known, literary scholarship rarely acknowledges that evolution by natural selection, on which Darwin's reputation is founded, was co-discovered by Alfred Russel Wallace, with his paper being presented in conjunction with Darwin's at the

Linæs society in 1858. Alfred Russel Wallace "never wavered in his defense of natural selection" (Moore 393), yet analyses of Darwinism often use Huxley, who at times diverged from Darwin, as the mouthpiece of "Darwinian" thought instead of Wallace. Although Huxley struggled throughout his lifetime with finances, like Darwin his education was of the highest caliber. He began his scientific career in the medical field, and earned accolades in anatomy and physiology while apprenticed at Charing Cross Hospital, before earning the Bachelor of Medicine at London University (Lyons 28). Facing mounting debt but too young to qualify for a license from the College of Surgeons to practice, Huxley enlisted in the navy and did as many other respected natural scientists did—he embarked on a journey around the world aboard the HMS *Rattlesnake* (29). Huxley was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1852. After struggling to find financial backing for his publications and a permanent position, he was finally appointed Professor of Natural History at the Royal School of Mines (30).

As a result of Huxley's research and publications in the field of zoology, he was well established in the scientific community prior to the advent of Darwinism. Although Huxley became famous through his fiery defense of Darwinism against Bishop Wilberforce, he was well-regarded in the scientific community for his own endeavors and intellectual achievements. He continued publishing monographs in a variety of areas of zoology even after the release of *Origin of Species.* Yet literary scholars largely overlook the part of his career preceding his relationship with Darwin, possibly since its focus is not on Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. While Huxley's publications on invertebrate morphology might not directly bear on the formulation of human subjectivity in turn-of-the-century Britain, they do reflect a career far more expansive than Huxley's classification as a follower of Darwin implies. I do not have the space in this thesis to do more than mention Huxley's vast oeuvre and suggest that his back-

ground in morphology contributed largely to the decisions he made regarding his later, more widely read publications.

Huxley's subscription to Darwinism has already been questioned by scientific scholars. Moore lists "three persistent heresies" that Huxley commits against Darwinian doctrine, the most important being his objection to Darwin's assertion that *Natura non facit saltum* (372). Essentially, Huxley felt that leaps in the evolutionary ladder, otherwise known as saltation, did occur—a major theoretical divergence. Mario Di Gregorio adds the observation "that Huxley's own research is not the place to look for evidence of any direct impact, positive or negative, of the publication of the *Origin of Species*" (417). Both Di Gregorio and Moore distinguish between evolution and Darwinism, aligning only the former with natural selection. Other historians of science, such as Stephen J. Gould, support such a distinction, and look to Darwin himself to support their conclusion: "Darwin shunned evolution as a description for his descent with modification, both because its technical meaning contrasted with his beliefs and because he was uncomfortable with the notion of inevitable progress inherent in its vernacular meaning" (*Ever Since Darwin* 35). The care with which scientists distinguish between "Darwinism" and "evolution" suggests a need for literary scholars to follow suit.

This distinction is more than a mere semantic convention, and represents a real difference of thought. Huxley's response to critical attention paid to Darwin's *Origin of Species* supports such a view. In his review of critical reactions, Huxley suggests that Darwinism explicitly contradicts teleological views of evolution and sets up the vivid analogy that, "according to Teleology, each organism is like a rifle bullet fired straight at a mark; according to Darwin, organisms are like grapeshot of which one hits something and the rest fall wide" (*Darwiniana* 84). Although Huxley supported Darwin in this review, he carefully distanced himself from the author of

the *Origin of Species.* Throughout the review, phrases such as "It is singular how differently one and the same book will impress different minds" and "If we apprehend the spirit of the 'Origin of Species' rightly" create a rhetorical distance between himself and the theories he interprets (*Darwiniana* 82, 86). Huxley's reference to "the spirit" of the discussed text as providing the foundation of his understanding, suggests that he is attributing a particular intent or agenda to the text, rather than strictly adhering to its content. Despite his friendship with Darwin, Huxley clearly delineates the boundary between himself, as the writer, and the theory being discussed.

Literary scholars referencing Huxley more often than not fail to analyze why they have chosen Huxley's texts to exemplify the Darwinian lens. Rather, they emphasize his position as a disciple of Darwin's revolutionary theory while minimizing theoretical differences between the two men. The majority of literary scholars focus on Huxley's lecture "Evolution and Ethics" and *Man's Place in Nature.* "Evolution and Ethics" was delivered at the end of Huxley's career. He died just one year after the publication of it with the Prolegomena while *Man's Place in Nature* was published more than two decades earlier. These two documents contain Huxley's most extensive statements of how evolution influenced the constitution of the human subject. The large gap between these two texts, and Huxley's relative silence on the matter of ethics until "Evolution and Ethics" has led biographers such as Sherrie Lyons to contend that Huxley viewed the questions of science and ethics as mutually exclusive and attempted to abstain from debates of morality in his scientific treatise. Indeed, *Man's Place in Nature* focuses largely on the anatomical nature of humanity in relation to the great apes rather than abstract questions of morality. With Darwin's publication of *Descent of Man,* which contains several lengthy chapters discussing the development of morality, the connection between evolution and ethics was raised. While

addressing Darwin's description of evolutionary morality, "Evolution and Ethics" rejects scientific knowledge as a tool for understanding the nature of ethics.

These two major works reveal that, rather than merely supporting Darwinism, Huxley consistently advanced his own scientific agenda throughout his career. In April 1861, just two years after *On the Origin of Species* was published, Huxley and Richard Owen engaged in a fiery debate over the anatomical proof of humankind's relation to apes. Darwin had left the issue open in his own writing, hesitating to add an additional controversy to his already controversial text. Owen, a more conservative scientist, argued for humanity's "uniqueness," while "Huxley, who had been dissecting primates while preparing his seminal work, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature,* showed conclusively that all apes had a hippocampus, and that any discontinuity in the structure of primate brains lay between prosimians (lemurs and tarsiers) and all other primates (including humans), not between man and the great apes" (Gould, *Ever Since Darwin* 49). The ensuing debate between Huxley and his former mentor achieved notoriety in *Punch.* Huxley's strategy for defining humankind's place in the natural world avoids mixing "questions of the origins of man's morals or ethics" and "questions of anatomy" (Lyons 203). This strategy differs from Darwin's later publication, *The Descent of Man,* which, while situating humankind within the natural order, points to humankind's more highly evolved ethical sense as defining the species' unique position. Unlike Owen, and more subtly Darwin, Huxley saw man's classification in relation to other species as one that should be addressed without regard to ethics.

In *Man's Place in Nature,* Huxley concludes his analysis of the fossils of pre-historic man on the ambiguous note "I may say, that the fossil remains of Man hitherto discovered do not seem to me to take us appreciably nearer to that lower pithecoid form, by the modification of which he has, probably, become what he is" (183). Although he fails to demonstrate irrefutably

the evolutionary connection between human and ape with his results, he still argues for the connection on the basis of the anatomical similarities between the two. He concludes that "Time will show. But in the meanwhile, if any form of the doctrine of progressive development is correct, we must extend by long epoch the most liberal estimate that has yet been made of the antiquity of Man" (184). Di Gregorio suggests that, despite Huxley's early defense of Darwinism, he had not been convinced enough to use it in his own research. He asserts that, prior to1868 "one of the obviously distinctive features of Darwin's theory—the notion of natural selection—fails to appear at all" in Huxley's own work (Di Gregorio 397). Huxley substantiation of Darwinism's implications for humankind's relationship to the animal kingdom differs by resting largely on his examination of fossil remains and the dissection of animals. This suggests that Huxley was not as adamantly Darwinian as he is typically regarded to be.

Huxley's focus on humanity's anatomy excludes ethics from the natural world. Rather than evolving from instinct, "all aspects of human nature, both 'brutishness' and 'princely dignity,' would have to be accounted for independently of the question of human origins" as not inherited but developed by each individual through conscious effort (Lyons 204). Thus, an individual's behavior could not be understood to be evolving along a family lineage but rather as cultivated by each individual across a lifetime. Moreover, humanity could not be equated with a particular ethical heritage.

In this way, *Man's Place in Nature* foreshadows Huxley's argument in "Evolution and Ethics" that "even if one accepts that evolution had produced creatures such as ourselves with a moral sense," logic does not lead to the supposition that evolution defines morality (Lyons 205). These two seminal works demonstrate that, throughout his career, Huxley saw morality as determined independently of the biological origins of humanity. John Glendening attempts to de-

fine Conrad's engagement with "Darwinism" through the parallels between his work and Huxley's lecture "Evolution and Ethics." He observes that "Although Huxley's writings sometimes express doubt about details of Darwin's theory, including the prominence it gives to natural selection and its adherence to strict gradualism, they leave no doubt that evolution involves an intense 'struggle for existence'" (*The Evolutionary Imagination* 146). While the phrase "struggle for existence" features prominently in *Origin of Species,* Huxley's lecture is conspicuously bereft of any mention of Darwin or "Darwinism." Considering Huxley's flagrant use of the Darwinian brand in earlier contexts and his responsibility for bringing the phrase into common usage, this omission begs further consideration of why scholars would choose to classify the lecture as purely "Darwinian."

That a writer or work is "Darwinian" does not logically follow from the presence of terminology commonly associated with "Darwinism" because Darwin borrowed a large number of these phrases from earlier scholars and scientists. Although Huxley employed a "Darwinian" term, such as "struggle for existence", the reference is to the term's originator, Thomas Malthus. Through this strategy, Huxley maintained the boundary between late century political discussions and Darwin. In 1894 when "Evolution and Ethics" was delivered, Huxley was immersed in the politics of England, having been elected as a privy councilor in 1892. Various scholars, including Michael Helfand and Moore, observe Malthusian influences on Huxley's social policy during this time period. Moore observes that later in his career, "Huxley kept 'Darwinism' out of politics, or tried to" by instead interpreting the turmoil in British life during the latter part of the century in "Malthusian" terms (407). Understanding how Huxley's use of "struggle for existence" refers to Malthus rather than Darwin reveals how Huxley continuously differentiates between the social policies ordering civilization and the cosmic order of the natural world. Hux-

ley's rhetorical strategy mirrors the argument of his lecture: that the process of natural selection, Darwinism, is aligned with nature and should never enter into the functions of civilization. The distinction that Huxley draws between a human being's acquirement of ethics as opposed to the evolution of competitive instincts further upholds the rupture between civilization and nature.

Additionally, Thomas Huxley's use of the phrase, "survival of the fittest" in "Evolution and Ethics", exemplifies a similar problem with the critical strategy behind calling the lecture "Darwinian." Although many literary scholars use the term as synecdoche for Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, Peter Bowler has partly attributed the social resonance of this theory to the term's origination in the works of sociologist Herbert Spencer. In Spencerian parlance, the term was used to justify a progressivist view of British Victorian society as well as nationalist competition and laissez-faire capitalism (i.e. individualism). In "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley famously attempted to defend the term from acquiring ethical connotations: "this fallacy has arisen out of the unfortunate ambiguity of the phrase 'survival of the fittest.' 'Fittest' has a connotation of 'best'; and about 'best' there hangs a moral flavor. In cosmic nature, however, what is 'fittest depends upon the conditions" (90-1). Even within the confines of this single lecture, there are competing understandings of the phrase's significance. Michael S. Helfand argues against common readings of the lecture as "a humanistic statement against the use of the authority of science—specifically Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution—to justify a specific social ethic or policy" (159). Rather, Helfand believes it represented "a rhetorical shift to deny his opponents the authority of science" (176). Indeed, in the lecture Huxley justifies Britain's existing capital driven system of colonial expansion by placing it within the frame of the "struggle for existence," a Malthusian term. However, he is careful to reject the application of Darwinism's hallmark, selection, direct or natural, within a given nation. In civilization, or industrial-

ized countries, Huxley's depicts a government and justice system that selectively punishes wrongdoing, eradicating individuals who commit anti-social activities.

In "Evolution and Ethics", Huxley repeatedly rejects the application of Darwinism to social systems. He suggests that natural selection, or what he refers to as the "cosmic processes" opposes the function of civilization. If anything resembling natural selection were to occur within society, then the process would involve that of direct selection of particular individuals by ordained authorities. Huxley rejects this hypothetical possibility, stating that "there is no hope that mere human will ever possess enough intelligence to select the fittest" ("Evolution and Ethics" 60). Huxley rejects Darwinism as a mechanism impacting the daily life of citizens in civilized countries and ridicules the notion as a "pigeon-fanciers polity" (53). Huxley's "pigeon" alludes to Darwin's extensive observation of the domesticated animal during his development of *Origin of Species*. The implication is that a human being is not a domesticated animal to be bred for preferred traits like a pigeon. If Darwinism is present in the lecture, then it is only through Huxley's implicit rejection of it as a premise for understanding social interaction.

Huxley observes that man, as a result of "his success in the struggle for existence," now occupies "the headship of the sentient world" (71). Although humankind has not been designed in a teleological sense to preside over the earth, Huxley's evolved man rules as a result of successfully waged wars of survival. I would like to compare this usage to the Prolegomena, where Huxley states that "What is often called the struggle for existence in society (I plead guilty of having used the term too loosely myself), is a contest, not for the means of existence, but for the means of enjoyment" (64). In both instances, Huxley emphasizes that any struggle within society is not one in the Darwinian sense. A Darwinian struggle would be determined by natural selection, which entails competition to pass on a particular individual's genetic material and the

extinction of the loser's line. Thus, analyses classifying "Evolution and Ethics" as Darwinian overlook a key aspect of Darwin's theory and many of the major points Huxley makes within the lecture.

Moore observes that, later in his career, Huxley abstained from the defense of Darwin's ideas. However, his rhetoric lent itself to conquest on behalf of the British Empire, so that European man's progression leads to the moment when "giants are subdued to our service" (Huxley "Evolution and Ethics" 70). Referring to the pain inherent in civilized man's repression of his bestial instincts, Huxley observes that:

> This baleful product of evolution increases in quantity, and in intensity, with advancing grades of animal organization, until it attains its highest level in man. Further, the consummation is not reached in man, the mere animal; nor in man, the whole or half savage; but only in man, the member of an organized polity. And it is a necessary consequence of his attempt to live in this way; that is, under those conditions which are essential to the full development of his noblest powers. ("Evolution and Ethics" 71)

As I suggested earlier, Huxley underlines the importance of organized society to a human being—it is essential to his/her continued primacy. Rather than undermining man's position of privilege in the natural order, Huxley uses evolution to support humankind's position. By definition, a human is civilized through his/her resistance to inherited instinct and engagement in an "everlasting battle with the self" (72). Rather than subverting the ideology of British supremacy, Huxley's theory presents a new framework justifying colonial expansion. European man possesses the "noblest powers," and as a result holds a privileged position. Helfand's assertion that Huxley employs science to support his own political convictions is correct. Under Huxley's

care, science justifies imperial expansion by excluding non-Europeans from a fully developed humanity.

Although I have only briefly reviewed two of the major publications within Thomas Huxley's oeuvre, I hope I have shown the fallacy of conflating these works and Darwinism. In the following sections, I draw salient points from Huxley's writings to demonstrate how H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad employ certain of his ideas while questioning others. Huxley contrasts the development of the traits predisposing the species to communities, altruism, against the self-centered impulses that would enable an individual to thrive in nature. Conrad and Wells interrogate Huxley and Darwin's notions of altruism and community. Their texts explore the possibility that if morality does not naturally occur, then it is artificial. Thus, their engagement with evolution questions whether humanity is inherently amoral—perhaps not such a novel conundrum. The implications of this disagreement over how humanity developed and how morality figured in the "creation" of a civilized human reverberated in the literary culture of the fin de siècle.

3 *The Island of Doctor Moreau*: Remnants of an Unknown Heritage

In *Man's Place in Nature,* Thomas Huxley suggests that "The question of questions for mankind—the problem which underlies all others, and is more deeply interesting than any other—is the ascertainment of the place which man occupies in nature and of his relations to the universe of things"—essentially, what distinguishes a human from other species in the natural world (71). Wells engages this evolutionary question in *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* as in many of his other science fiction romances. Edward Prendick's encounter with the Beast People, artificial conflations of human and animal, demonstrates the ongoing challenge of answering Huxley's question. Wells continues to ask about the nature of humankind's heritage. If it is the

same as that of the beasts, then can he ever truly be anything other than an animal? As a former student of Huxley, Wells was versed in the principles of morphology and evolution in a more formal manner than Conrad. This has led scholars such as Nicoletta Vallorani to see Moreau as representative of Huxley, and other scholars to see the text as supporting Huxley's arguments. Although Wells engages with Huxley's understanding of ethics and evolution, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* questions the viability of Huxley's depiction of how sympathy dictates the interactions of human beings.

Wells's novella was published in 1896, one year after Huxley's death and several years before Conrad's publication of *Heart of Darkness*. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* Prendick is shipwrecked on the provisionless dinghy of the *Lady Vain*. After resigning himself to death, he is rescued by the mysterious Montgomery and his strange attendant aboard the *Ipecacuanha.* Waking early one morning, Prendick finds Montgomery disembarking onto a launch piloted by an unknown old man and what he takes to be a curious-looking bunch of natives. Initially, the drunken captain of the *Ipecacuanha* and Montgomery's friend both refuse to allow Prendick aboard their respective vessels, but after Montgomery sees Prendick cast adrift on the ocean, he takes Prendick onto their launch and on to the island. Once on the island, Prendick is mystified by the grotesque appearance of the islanders and the peculiar behavior of the two men. After accidentally learning the name of Montgomery's associate, Moreau, recalling the sordid headlines associated with him, and then witnessing his vivisection of a puma, Prendick flees their compound.

After being chased by one of the Beast People through the jungle and attempting to hide from Moreau in the Beast People's encampment, Prendick slowly discovers the concealed truth about Moreau and Montgomery's activities. Climactically, Moreau explains his creations; they

are products of the surgical and psychological reconstruction of diverse animals into the semblance of men. Catastrophe strikes when Moreau's latest creation, a puma-woman, breaks free and, in the course of his pursuit, she and Moreau kill each other. Distraught, Montgomery drunkenly destroys their shelter and most of their supplies before accidentally killing himself and his attendant, one of Moreau's creations, in an alcoholic revel. Left alone, Prendick attempts to assure his survival by assuming Moreau's position of divine authority amongst the Beast People. However, the latter slowly devolve, reverting to their animal instincts without Moreau there to enforce his prohibitory laws. Prendick escapes the island aboard a ghostly dinghy and is picked up by a passing ship. Returned to civilization, he is haunted by his memories of the Beast People and imagines the animal side of every human being he encounters.

The Island of Doctor Moreau interrogates the notions of sympathy and altruism as formative characteristics of human behavior. Like *Heart of Darkness,* where Marlow narrates his journey through the Congo to a community of old friends bound by their shared experience of shipboard life, it is constructed as a frame narrative. Huxley's description of sympathy indicates how the novella's form plays into Wells's treatment of human relationships, which are tempered by moral obligation. Using a frame narrative adds a layer to the text that enables the authors to imagine a reception of their tales; or, a scenario for how readers will relate to their text. In Marlow's frame, the tale's reception depends on a foundation of sympathetic personal relations built on a shared history. Marlow's audience is predisposed to receive his tale favorably because they already share a connection. However, Prendick's narrative of his island adventure is published posthumously by his nephew, Charles Prendick. Commenting on the connection between the author's stylistic and topical concerns, Vallorani argues that *The Island of Dr. Moreau* creates "the impression of a thematic, stylistic and structural patchwork" that suggests "the need to cope

with the question of evolution" (248, 249). She suggests that Wells struggles to imagine the extensive transformation necessary to move from animal to human through Moreau's mixing of the forms of different species to construct a new whole. In doing so, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* portrays the human experience as that of a "hybrid organism which has not yet become what it must be" (259). Her analysis of the texts focuses on how Wells's fixation with the boundaries delineating human and animal is replicated in Wells's combination of the genres of science and romance. The novella not only crosses the boundaries of the biological space between human and animal; science and fiction; the form of the novella recreates the interactions between human beings. In Huxley's view, humans are distinguished from animals by the ability to establish cooperative groups that employ ethics to act beyond self-interest and bridge the boundaries of the individual. While the nephew introduces Prendick's narrative, the frame is incomplete, and he does not offer a conclusion or response to the tale he is publishing on behalf of his uncle. The frame, which forges the connection between narrator and audience, is fragmented to suggest a similar disruption to inter-personal, or social, bonds. Unlike Marlow's, Prendick's tale is not relayed to sympathetic listeners with whom the narrator shares a bond.

Prendick's predicament as a victim of shipwreck at the mercy of unfamiliar persons mirrors the situation of the tale itself: his journal is published posthumously by his nephew and is adrift without the benefit of his reputation to support his wild claims. Prendick's nephew, who as a family member would seem a likely ally, will only corroborate Prendick's statements as they relate to already-known facts. His introduction does little to support his uncle when he states that Prendick "gave such a strange account of himself that he was supposed demented" and points out that "this narrative is without confirmation in its most essential particular," the existence of Moreau's Beast People (5). Prendick's nephew, Charles, undermines his uncle's credi-

bility by revealing his diagnosis of mental illness subsequent to the incident. He also deliberately reveals that there is evidence to contradict his uncle's account, since later visitors to the island found no evidence of the Beast People.

Charles's strongest statement in support of his uncle is that he "passed out of human knowledge about latitude 5° S. and longitude 105° W., and reappeared in the same part of the ocean after a space of eleven months. In some way he must have lived during the interval" (6). Rather than even offering his own personal testimonial to his uncle's general veracity, Charles withholds any personal support. This disruption of the typical familial social bond, and lack of sympathetic connection between the two men, is characteristic of a more wide-reaching failure of the social instinct that Wells depicts in his novella. Darwin and Huxley both characterize human beings as social animals, who thrive through their relations with their fellows. Wells's frame introduces a pattern of persons behaving without sympathy towards each other and, through their struggles, highlights the importance of ethical interaction even within the evolutionary framework.

Like *Heart of Darkness, The Island of Doctor Moreau* raises the issue of cannibalism. Following his initial shipwreck after the sinking of the *Lady Vain,* Prendick faces starvation aboard a dinghy in the company of two other victims of the wreck. Six days after the wreck, two of which they have spent without food or water, Prendick reveals that "Helmar gave voice to the thing we all had in mind. I remember our voices dry and thin, so that we bent towards one another and spared our words. I stood out against it with all my might, was rather for scuttling the boat and perishing together among the sharks that followed us; but when Helmar said that if his proposal was accepted we should have drink, the sailor came round to him" (8). Prendick never names "the thing," but cannibalism is clearly implied. Prendick's reticence on the issue—he

simply exhorts his audience that "It is quite impossible for the ordinary reader to imagine those eight days"—underlines his desire to distance himself from the prohibited act (8). From an evolutionary standpoint, cannibalism would be an entirely self-interested act—it would facilitate the continuation of the individual's genetic material at the expense of fellow humans. Cannibalism enables the survival of the fittest: the strong would consume the weaker members of the species to ensure their survival; however, this would undermine the principles of social order and civility.

Thus, although the three men agree to draw straws to determine who will be eaten, the outcome does not follow the dictates of civilized order. Prendick watches as "the lot fell upon the sailor, but he was the strongest of us and would not abide by it, and attacked Helmar with his hands" (8). Even though the men agree upon a certain procedure for the decision, once they give free reign to their survival instincts rather than social instincts civilized order is obliterated. The dinghy and its inhabitants are removed from society and behave accordingly without restraint. Prendick emphasizes that he opposed the decision with "all" his might, yet he gives in, which suggests a weak will. Prendick's inability to restrain himself is a recurring issue within the narrative, and it contrasts sharply with Marlow's complete self-control.

The frame's style reflects Prendick's realization aboard the *Ipecacuanha* that he "was merely a bit of human flotsam, cut off from my resources and with my fare unpaid, a mere casual dependent on the bounty—or speculative enterprise—of the ship" (17). Darwin suggests that, even without modern society's externalization of efforts to encourage behavior for the "good of the community," an individual's social instincts "would still give the impulse to act for the good of the community, this impulse being strengthened, directed, and sometimes even deflected by public opinion, the power of which rests, as we shall presently see on instinctive sympathy" (*De-*

scent of Man 72). In other words, although civilization has developed institutions to encourage good behavior from its members, these institutions merely reinforce a pre-existing drive inherent to the members of the species. Yet the world Prendick describes in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* undermines Darwin's argument that instinctual sympathy is the key to advanced civilization and humanity's competitive domination. From the introduction on, sympathy in the most fundamental of circumstances—like the relationship between family members—is absent. As Prendick attempts to defuse a conflict between Montgomery and the captain, he puts himself in the path of the captain's ill-will. His response imagines his human worth in relation to his financial wealth. His "resources" are not intrinsic to his person; he does not consider his value to be related to his personality, intellect, or physical health. Instead of imagining a shared human bond, Prendick disassociates himself from any relation to either Montgomery or the captain, even though Montgomery was responsible for Prendick's rescue.

Prendick chronicles his failure of sympathy with those individuals he encounters throughout the narrative. His relationship with his savior, Montgomery, shifts repeatedly. When Prendick awakes after his rescue from his initial shipwreck, Montgomery tells him that "you were in luck…to get picked up by a ship with a medical man aboard" and later emphasizes that Prendick may eat "Thanks to me" (10-1). Montgomery's statements attempt to establish a communal bond between himself and Prendick. However, his fulfillment of his social obligation to Prendick, as a fellow Englishman, is later undermined by his contradictory assignation of Prendick's salvation to "chance" (19). Montgomery's vacillations destabilize Darwin's definition of the social instinct and suggest a more important role for public opinion than merely strengthening humanity's sympathetic urges. In Conrad's novella, Marlow emphasizes how public institutions work to civilize the individual. Similarly, Wells's text emphasizes that sympathy,

and thus altruistic behavior, are endangered in a world isolated from the civilized public domains of Europe.

The question of whether there are proper sympathetic relations is raised by Prendick in response to Montgomery's intimacy with the Beast People. Prendick tells the reader that Montgomery "did not like men," that after his time among the Beast People, human beings seemed "unnaturally long in the leg, flat in the face, prominent in the forehead, suspicious, dangerous, and cold-hearted" (83). Prendick goes further: "I fancied even then that he had a sneaking kindness for some of these metamorphosed brutes, a vicious sympathy with some of their ways, but that he attempted to veil from me at first" (83). Prendick's comments are meant to critique Montgomery for his duplicitous secret-keeping. However, he also reveals his own antipathy towards Montgomery; he does not trust him. Montgomery's ability to relate to the Beast People has facilitated his survival, enabling him to interact in a community by training some of the Beast People to perform tasks.

Montgomery's ability to sympathize with the Beast People, and consequently to see some of himself in them is reminiscent of Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature.* In the text, Huxley suggests that "brought face to face with these blurred copies of himself, the thoughtful of men is conscious of a certain shock, due, perhaps, not so much to disgust at the aspect of what looks like an insulting caricature, as to the awakening of a sudden and profound mistrust of time honoured theories and strongly-rooted prejudices regarding his own position in nature" (73-4). Huxley has preceded this comment with a catalogue of what he terms man-like apes, offering readers an image of the natural world that demonstrates humankind's inclusion within its bounds. Wells obliquely weaves Huxley's questions regarding "Whence our race has come; what are the limits of our power over nature, and of nature's power over us; to what goal we are tending" into his

narrative (Huxley 71). Prendick initially struggles to relate to the Beast People by thinking of them as the "islanders" and relating them to natives he has encountered during earlier travels. Even before discovering the truth of their origins, he is amazed at their failure to live up to the "human heritage I ascribed to them" (55). Prendick rejects a shared heritage between himself and the Beast People by testifying to the implausibility of their having any civilized, human origin. However, throughout the text, Prendick's behavior undermines his own definition of humanity, and his claims to be human himself. According to Huxley and Darwin, the origins of humanity, or the "human heritage," are in the animal world. Thus, Wells inverts Huxley's attempts to show how animals are like human beings by demonstrating how, by the same connection, humans are like animals.

Prendick's Beast People, like Marlow's cannibals and native tribespersons, challenge the protagonist to experience the connection between the human self and the natural world. Prendick initially makes multiple comparisons between the islanders and other natives he has previously encountered, wondering at the difference. As he is towed by Moreau's boat to the island, he looks at the Beast People, thinking, "I saw only their faces, yet there was something in their faces—I knew not what—that gave me a spasm of disgust" (27). Prendick reflects that:

> They seemed to me then to be brown men, but their limbs were oddly swathed in some thin dirty white stuff down even to the fingers and feet. I have never seen men so wrapped up before, and women so only in the East. They wore turbans too, and thereunder peered out their elfin faces at me, faces with protruding lower jaws and bright eyes. They had lank black hair almost like horse hair, and seemed, as they sat, to exceed in stature any race of men I have seen (27).

Prendick's response to the Beast People attempts to equate them with native subjects of the British Empire. However, the islanders seem alien even from this perspective. Although Huxley suggests that the thoughtful man will question his own place in nature, Prendick is merely instinctively repulsed by their faces. He instead questions the place within the natural world of the men he watches and imagines them to be wholly unrelated to himself, a civilized European. Unlike Marlow, who meditates on the cultural significance of the drums he hears in the jungle and tries to imagine the psychological or sociological impulses governing the cannibals' restraint, Prendick is entirely preoccupied with appearance. His description remains on the surface, focusing on the materials of their dress and their bestial physiology.

As Prendick watches the islanders unload the launch, he repeatedly emphasizes that they are "grotesque-looking creatures" making "the clumsiest movements" and "awkward gestures" (28). Prendick establishes his assumption of the islanders' monstrousness in the most empirical way possible, by offering an account of their bizarre appearances and manners, much in the manner of a naturalist in the wild. The resulting straightforward narrative style is very different from Marlow's dramatic existential musings. However, while Prendick's description of his revulsion from the islanders reflects his alienation from them, his style also reveals his alienation from his assumed audience. As he maintains from the outset of his story, the "ordinary reader," cannot relate to his tale because "he has not—luckily for himself—anything in his memory to imagine with" (8). The last chapter of the novella is entitled "The Man Alone," commenting not only on Prendick's solitary existence on the island after Montgomery and Moreau's deaths, but also on his isolation from the rest of humanity upon his return to Europe. Prendick's narrative attempts to address an audience where the social instinct of sympathy has already failed prior to his story's beginning. Thus, his dwelling on empirical details implicitly speaks to his nephew's

remark in the framing introduction that "he was supposed demented" by emphasizing the scientific clarity of his recollections. Prendick cannot afford to assume sympathetic listeners as Marlow can.

Moreau, like Kurtz, replicates the "administrative authority" that Huxley conceives in the Prolegomena to "Evolution and Ethics" (49). This authority would be "far superior in power and intelligence to men" and would treat civilization in the manner of a garden; he would "select his human agents, with a view to his ideal of a successful colony, just as the gardener selects his plants" and extirpate those he deemed un-fit, which would include those ill of body or mind, the aged, and the weak (49). Huxley explicitly rejects the viability of this scenario, stating that it would destroy the social bonds responsible for civilization. The administrative authority would be one among those "whose whole lives…are an education in the noble art of suppressing natural affection and sympathy," who therefore "are not likely to have any large stock of these commodities left. But, without them, there is no conscience, nor any restraint on the conduct of men" (62). As he recounts his experiments to Prendick, Moreau's admission that "Sympathetic pain—all I know of it I remember as a thing I used to suffer from years ago" is reminiscent of Huxley's administrative authority (75). Moreau recasts the defining feature of humanity, sympathy, in the wholly negative light of pain. Rather than a boon, community becomes an excruciating and undesirable curse. His ability to perform what he imagines to be similar to "artful torture" on the animals, and his disregard for Prendick and Montgomery demonstrate the weakening of the social bond.

Like Conrad, Wells questions the place of humanity in nature, or the schematics for the construction of the civilized subject in relation to nature. In *Heart of Darkness,* Marlow suggests that much of what Europeans define as human is governed by the presence of social institutions

to impose order on the populace, the presence of the butcher and the policeman. Humanity is only an externally enforced ethical order and therefore not intrinsic, as Marlow discovers when he plunges into the jungle. Prendick's retrospective musing about the Beast People, "I did not know yet how far they were from the human heritage I ascribed to them" leads into the question of what he believes a "human heritage" to be (55). Huxley's attempt to examine the fossils of the great apes to discover humankind's heritage, and the concurrent investigation into humanity's relationship to the lower animals, complicates Prendick's statement. Where the human race came from was an increasingly debated question even within scientific discourse that was by no means resolved by Darwin. Huxley attempted to demonstrate humankind's evolutionary connection to apes, thus undermining Prendick's implicit belief in a human heritage distinct from the beasts. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* repeatedly suggests, contrary to the proclamations of its protagonist, the ongoing presence of humankind's animal heritage. The human characters, and the Beast People as they mimic humanity, offer differing accounts of the "human" category.

Moreau, who struggles to mold the Beast People into human beings, would likely seem the authority on the definition of the human subject. However, the standards of behavior that he maintains for himself, and criticizes other human beings for failing to uphold, differ from his construction of the Beast People. Moreau admits to Prendick that "I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter. The study of Nature makes a man at last as remorseless as Nature" (75). Like Huxley's "administrative authority", Moreau is functionally unstable and he contradicts himself. He criticizes Prendick for his materialism yet is almost entirely concerned with the material aspect of humanity himself. Ethics, the abstract concepts that enable human civilization, do not concern him. He imagines ethics as something outside the natural order, something projected onto the individual to graft him or her into the construct of society and to guide the actions

of less intelligent individuals. Moreau describes his activities as "art," thus underlining the artifice of his project (81). Although his work is in the "study" of nature and surgically mimics forms found in nature, his work is art, or artifice, and therefore unnatural and outside the realm of what he studies.

The psychological aspect of humanity proves more difficult than the physiological dimensions to Moreau's attempts to construct human beings from animals. Moreau admits that his work adheres to "the ideal of humanity" (77). Yet what he defines as ideal for a human is ambiguous. Moreau alternately dismisses sensory stimulus and ethical impulses. The human form is increasingly simple for him to construct, and he tells Prendick that hypnotism offers a promising future to his work, affording "the promise of a possibility of replacing old inherent instincts by new suggestions, grafted upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas. Very much indeed of what we call moral education is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct" (73). Like Prendick, Moreau suggests that the Beast People's lack of a human heritage is a major impediment to their current mimicry of humanity. However, unlike Prendick's distaste, Moreau's statement about the Beast People focuses on their similarity to human beings. Both groups learn in similar ways, by perverting instinct with morality.

Moreau's description of the ethical human as the product of a particular education, rather than the result of naturally occurring tendencies, is more in keeping with Huxley's description of ethics than with Darwin's. Although both naturalists suggest that certain instincts of self-interest necessarily conflict with the social concerns of ethics, Darwin suggests that ethics derive from social instincts, which are naturally occurring. Social instincts, although in conflict occasionally with individual self-interest, enable the flourishing of the species itself, and occur as naturally as the more self-interested drives.

Wells's final chapter, "The Man Alone," describes the final rupture of the sympathetic social bond. After escaping the island, Prendick returns to civilization yet is unable to reconnect to his fellow human beings: "instead of that confidence and sympathy I had expected, a strange enhancement of the uncertainty and dread I had experienced during my stay upon the island. No one would believe me, I was almost as queer to men as I had been to the Beast People. I may have caught something of the natural wildness of my companions" (130). Although he imagines that he has changed, growing wilder, Prendick's behavior has consistently been more brutish than he has admitted to himself. From the narrative's beginning in the lifeboat, Prendick's actions have more often than not been guided by the necessity of self-preservation or survival—the most fundamental of animal instincts. He is quick to sacrifice his moral abhorrence of cannibalism in the interest of his own life, and he easily foregoes his life-long alcohol abstinence to cope with psychological stress.

Oddly, Prendick's conclusion that "There it must be, I think, in the vast and eternal laws of matter, and not in the daily cares and sins and troubles of men, that whatever is more than animal within us must find its solace and its home. I hope, or I could not live" evokes Moreau's rejection of mundane human life for intellectual pursuits (131). His conclusion suggests that only by gazing outside the human condition and moving away from the self-interested gaze necessitated by survival, can humanity overcome its animal heritage. Like Marlow, Prendick initially lies about his experience, feigning amnesia after having his sanity questioned. Although both Prendick and Marlow feel dislocated from the general crush of the populace, their conclusions are at odds with each other. Prendick rejects human company, casting off sympathy and his fellow creatures to rise above the current human condition. Yet even as he attempts to distance himself, and humanity, from the species' animal heritage, his impulses are guided by the instinct

of self-preservation or to continue living. Thus, Prendick's rejection of his social instincts and sympathetic impulses does not elevate him to a higher level on the evolutionary ladder. Rather, his actions are guided by his desire to continue living, the most fundamental drive shared by all animals.

Prendick, like Moreau, idealizes a hyper-intellectualized notion of humanity, cloven from the vestiges of a bestial heritage. His studies of astronomy and physics replicate the purpose of Moreau's studies—to cast off the animal—and share a similar lack of an end goal. He hopes, but his desire focuses retrospectively on the shedding of an animal past, rather than looking towards realizing a particular purpose. Prendick's directionless conclusion—he ends with a solitary, goalless hope—alludes to Huxley's dismissal of teleology. Like Huxley's account of the struggles of human civilization, doomed to strive towards ever loftier heights of evolution only to crumble as nature once resumes control, Prendick's own desires are without aim. The words that construct his desire to disinherit himself from his animal lineage reiterate the fact that he wishes to forget. Wells's dystopic depiction of a world governed by Huxley's version of evolution underlines such a system's intrinsic tendency towards decay. Prendick's own views at the conclusion echo Huxley's assertions, in particular the agnostic turn from ephemeral concepts of morality to observable interactions of the material world to ascertain humankind's place or home. Yet Wells has consistently treated Prendick with contempt, portraying him as a man who fails to understand himself. If Moreau and Prendick, two characters designed for readers to *not* sympathize with, proclaim a position similar to Huxley's, then is Wells advocating Huxley's point? Thus, Prendick's final summation of existence does not mean that Wells reiterates Huxley's removal of ethics from the human position in the cosmic order. In fact, with consideration of the proclamation's source, the text instead invites readers to resist such an understanding of ethic's place.

4 *Heart of Darkness:* Community and the Constraint of the Individual

The Island of Doctor Moreau was published just five years before *Heart of Darkness,* which has caused scholars such as Patrick McCarthy to suggest that Joseph Conrad was responding to H. G. Wells's use of evolutionary theory in his novella. Thomas Huxley's nearly contemporaneous death in 1895 certainly invites the conclusion that Conrad was responding to questions raised by Huxley. All three men question not only humankind's place in nature, but the proper means of determining this—through ethical or scientific inquiry. Yet *Heart of Darkness* complicates the concepts of morality and good through Kurtz's horrific accomplishments. On a larger scale, the Company and Europe's imperial expansion are vilified for their behavior in Africa. Conrad deconstructs the presumed connection between "civilized" society and morality. In Darwin and Huxley's ideal societies, ethics govern the relationships between human beings. Thus, good treatment of fellow humans presumably benefits any given civilization as a whole. However, Conrad separates the good of society from the good of ethics. In *Heart of Darkness,* ethical behavior is not identified with European civilization; rather, the scope of moral obligation is expanded to the previously excluded Congo.

Joseph Conrad's distinctive treatment of the jungle as a presence has often been commented on by scholars aligning the text with Gothic traditions and, more recently, in Ecocritical treatments. In his Ecocritical analysis, for example, Jeffrey Myers suggests that Conrad's use of Darwinism enables the text to recognize a greater confluence between European man and nature, although Conrad "nonetheless flinches from facing the implications of this interrogation, which would entail his reimagining as benevolent and liberating a reincorporation of the self into the 'wilderness'—a reincorporation that this story imagines as powerfully threatening" (107). The threat of the wilderness can be felt as Marlow listens to the mysterious Russian harlequin's ac-

count of Kurtz. Slowly, Marlow begins to perceive the already oppressively looming jungle as being even more ominous, and marvels that "The woods were unmoved like a mask—heavy like the closed door of a prison—they looked with their air of hidden knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable silence" (56). Nature and, by proxy, Africa resist Marlow's notion of a blank space on the map for Europeans like the harlequin youth, who "wanted nothing from the wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through" (55). The European desire epitomized by Marlow and the Russian to escape the restraints of society by returning to the wilderness, that is so-called non-civilized countries, is mocked by the reality of the jungle. As Myers claims, Conrad's tale reflects how Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection had recast the natural world. However, Huxley and Darwin imagined the natural world as a battlefield of living creatures striving to satisfy competing drives without hope of escape from the prison of instincts—a far cry from Myers's forum for the liberation of self.

Huxley and Darwin's works contributed to the reimagining of 'man's place in nature' through empirical observation rather than theological ordination and replaced the unassuming dust that God made into humankind with a network of competing instincts arising from the natural world. In this evolutionary framework, man can no longer freely encounter the world as the harlequin dreams of doing. Instead, the implications of evolution cast nature in the semblance of a prison; man cannot breezily "push on through" but is trapped in either the struggle for existence or the struggle with his own instincts. Marlow meditates on how restraint constructs humanity within civilization and outside, in the wilderness, in order to challenge assumed European superiority.

Restraint figures prominently throughout *Heart of Darkness*; Marlow perceives it to govern his fate as well as the fates of those he encounters on his journey. Huxley suggests that self-

restraint is "the essence of the ethical process" and "an essential condition of the existence of every polity" ("Ethics and Evolution" 58). Huxley's definition of restraint is "the check upon this free play of self-assertion, or natural liberty" and states that restraint is inspired by "the tendency, so strongly developed in man, to reproduce in himself actions and feelings similar to, or correlated with those of other men" (56). Equally important in the narrative, although not mentioned explicitly, is what Darwin and Huxley both refer to as "sympathy." As in *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* this phenomenon is what enables individual members of a species to relate to one another in order to work cooperatively towards the continuation of the entire group rather than just the individual. In *Heart of Darkness,* Conrad projects the notions of sympathy and restraint hypothesized by Huxley and Darwin onto colonial Africa to create a view of humanity as inescapably shackled to the demands of civilization as well as to the imperatives of inherited instinct.

While arguing that civilization requires antagonism between the "artificial" state of community and natural processes, Huxley maintains that "man, physical, intellectual, and moral, is as much a part of nature, as purely a product of the cosmic process, as the humblest weed" ("Ethics and Evolution" 45). Huxley establishes a complex relationship between human and nature: humankind will always be a part of nature, yet being human entails the continued struggle against being driven solely by the currents of competition. Joseph Conrad's use of a frame in *Heart of Darkness* reflects this complexity. Marlow narrates his journey to an unnamed audience on the deck of a ship anchored just off the shore of London. The novella's primary incidents, Marlow's journey down the river in the Congo as the captain of a steamboat and his encounter with Kurtz, have already been completed by the beginning of the narrative. By framing the story against an idealistic view of civilized London, Conrad calls attention to the implications

of Marlow's tale for European society at home as well as abroad. As he repeatedly emphasizes, England was once a wilderness colonized by Romans, where "cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death" ruled (Conrad 6). Although Marlow's experience in the Congo is complete by the time readers open the novella, *Heart of Darkness* itself is just beginning. The resulting overlap undermines the assumed binary of wild Africa and civilized London. Although London, as a city, is opposed to natural order, Conrad echoes Huxley's argument that man's artifice arises from what Huxley calls "the cosmic process."

In Darwin and Huxley's view, civilization is made possible by the restraint of humankind's competitive drives to benefit the community. Civilization sometimes requires the suppression of the individual's needs in favor of the group's needs, which Huxley suggests results from the human tendency to operate as part of a social organism. He suggests that "We judge the acts of others by our own sympathies, and we judge our own acts by the sympathies of others" and strive to achieve the pleasure associated with favored actions ("Evolution and Ethics" 57). In *Heart of Darkness,* the narrator identifies the members of Marlow's audience as sharing "the bond of the sea" that held their "hearts together through long periods of separation, [and] it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns—and convictions" (3). This commonality among the boat's passengers—the sea—exemplifies sympathy. Through their mutual experiences, the men are able to relate to each other and to overcome their differences. The bond enables them to join together to form a microcosm of society. Restraint is immediately implicated in this society. The men have to tolerate each other, so, as Huxley suggests, they must necessarily repress certain thoughts or impulses. Although their ability to sympathize with one another and share mutual affection is positive, they nonetheless are not free to behave as they wish.

Moreover, the state of being "bound" in a physical sense means a restriction of individual movement. The men are anchored in society, and act according to their fellows' feelings.

The allegiance of Marlow's fictional audience to civilization is underlined by the fact that the men are identified only by their jobs, or their roles in society: "The Director of Companies," "The Lawyer," "The Accountant," our unnamed frame narrator, and Marlow (3). Conrad categorizes the audience members by title rather than identifying them through names. The effect is that, rather than telling his story to individual human beings, Marlow speaks to archetypes corresponding to the readers of *Blackwood's* magazine, where the novel was first serialized. The audience members, within the social framework, are not significant in their individuality, but rather through their relationship to society and their function within the civilizing framework. The place of each audience member is mediated and limited by his title—each one's place in the story itself is restrained. The jobs that each audience member is associated with are entangled in the structure of civilization and in particular, imperialism.

Further along in his tale, Marlow interrupts himself to acknowledge his audience. He complains that "I felt often its [inner truth's] mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for—what is it? half a crown a tumble…." (Conrad 34). He hints that the essential worth of any being within the social framework is not in his or her unique humanity, but rather in the ability to perform the role he or she inhabits. Like Prendick in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Marlow emphasizes the inability of his listeners to make the intellectual leap from civilized Europe to what he perceives as the uninhibited wilderness of the Congo. Yet Marlow does not entirely disavow the power of sympathy, and he acknowledges to his listeners that "Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know" (Conrad 27). Thus, Marlow and Conrad seem to

place greater importance than Prendick and Wells on the strength of social bonds: the familiarity between Marlow and his audience constructs a bridge of understanding that is not present in Prendick's narrative. Moreover, Marlow's interruptions puncture the boundary between his story's plot and his audience's reception of it, so that the audience is as much a part of the tale for readers as the journey through the Congo. "Monkey tricks" recalls the contested conclusion that man and ape are related that Huxley attempted to reach in *Man's Place in Nature*. In context, the metaphor is insulting, implying that, as a performance, society is surface-level.

Marlow's ridicule of his listeners' work and, since they are defined by their work within the narrative, their essential selves, elicits an unsurprisingly negative response. The interruption functions in much the way society functions in an evolutionary framework, keeping Marlow in line by reminding him of his listeners and his obligations to them. The frame-narrator interposes himself again: "'Try to be civil, Marlow,' growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself" (34). The interjection is deliberately not attributed to a particular audience member, so that the voice represents all Marlow's listeners. The frame grounds Marlow in civilization as his listeners remind him of proper decorum, or require him to model civilized behavior. However, the voice growls like an animal, underlining that, although the frame superficially reinscribes the boundaries of society, the animal heritage invoked by Marlow's reference to the monkey is real and can only be suppressed rather than erased.

Marlow continues his account of his travails on the river by describing the native workers the Company employed. Anticipating his listeners' response, Marlow assures them that these were "Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place" (34). Like his listeners, the cannibals are understood to inhabit a particular social space. From their efficient occupation of their place, and performance of the tricks associated with that space, the cannibals derive their worth. Alan

Hunter's claim that "Much has been made, critically, of the restraint of the cannibals in *Heart of Darkness,* and the general consensus appears to be that the cannibals do have restraint, although Kurtz does not" bears repeating (*Joseph Conrad* 117). However, I diverge from his theory that Marlow is possibly projecting his own concerns onto the cannibals. Hunter asserts this to support his collapse of ethics, or more precisely Western ethics, into restraint and to argue that the cannibal's behavior represents a mere instinct for survival, a fear of the settlers' guns keeping them in line. However, Marlow wonders, "Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they didn't go for us—they were thirty to five—and have a good tuck-in for once amazes me now when I think of it. They were big powerful men with not much capacity to weigh the consequences, with courage, with strength" (41). Marlow's amazement undermines Hunter's claims by suggesting that the cannibals were powerful enough to have overwhelmed himself and the settlers, despite the latter's guns.

In the relationship between the cannibals and Marlow as captain of their steam boat, the principle of sympathy seems to guide both parties' actions. Marlow's attempts to understand the cannibals' behavior and to relate to them exemplify the relationship between himself and them as fellow human beings. Marlow relates to them by using a shared experience, hunger, to bridge the cultural gap through sympathy. Similarly, if the cannibals had been without sympathy, they would have been unable to restrain themselves, so that one and then all would have attacked the settlers and satisfied their nearly overwhelming urge to eat and survive. Such behavior would have fit into a world strictly governed by competition or survival of the fittest—the stronger group with the larger number.

The cannibals' abstinence causes Marlow to wonder about his "hungry and forbearing friends," to think of them "as you would on any human being with a curiosity of their impulses,

motives, capacities, weaknesses, when brought to the test of an inexorable physical necessity. Restraint! What possible restraint?" (41). The characterization of the cannibals as "forbearing" not only underlines their self-restraint, but also carries the implication that they are refraining from claiming what is their due, in this case a meal. Marlow could not at the time and still cannot later while relating their circumstances, imagine a power in the wilderness more powerful than the desire for self-preservation. The result is that he sees the cannibals as representative of "any human being" and finds himself imagining mental faculties and psychologies for them that would have shocked his European hearers in their divergence from the typical characterization of "savages" as either children or brutes.

In this regard, Marlow seems to hold to Darwin's assertion that "it cannot be maintained that the social instincts are ordinarily stronger in man, or have become stronger through long-continued habit, than the instincts, for instance, of self-preservation, hunger, lust, vengeance" (89). In the brutal jungle, Marlow struggles to understand what could be stronger than the instinct to survive. Darwin claims that social instincts are not exclusive to man; he had observed biological altruism in insects and birds. However, he argues that, in man's case, morality has evolved from these instincts through the process of natural selection. Despite Marlow's assumptions, the cannibals are not overwhelmed by their hunger and do not attack the pilgrims—although given the latter's inability to shoot straight they would be easy meals. The restraint that Marlow looks for is of the European variety; as he later observes, there is no policeman or neighborly approbation of the kind found in London to control the behavior of any person. However, Marlow views Africa as a European and, much as the blankness of the English map was misleading—the wilderness is forcefully present in Conrad's narrative—his assumptions regarding the absence of any social construct among the natives are likely equally faulty.

In the Congo, Marlow sees the social order, which Darwin claims evolved from social instincts, as either collapsing or absent. Recollecting the death of his helmsman while the steamer was under attack, he twice flings accusations at his audience in civilized England. He exclaims, "This is the worst of trying to tell….Here you all are each moored with two good addresses like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal—you hear—normal from year's end to year's end" (47). The function of these two figures, the butcher and the policeman, is to create the basis for civilized life. The butcher provides meat for the citizens so that their hunger is satisfied without their having to hunt, kill, or compete for a meager food supply as wild animals would. The policeman enforces the laws that order civilization, removing and punishing those who disobey and reminding other citizens of the possible consequences of their actions. The alignment of his narrators with a doubly moored boat reiterates Marlow's image of them as walking a tightrope, similarly moored at two points. These two anchoring forces ground his listeners in civilization and restrain them from gratifying their impulses; they cannot sway in the breeze of instinctual urges as Kurtz had the opportunity to do and thus cannot sympathize with Marlow's exposure.

Marlow perceives the difference between civilization, represented by England, and the Congo as hindering the ability of his listeners to understand the precariousness of his own grasp on life as well as the immensity of the cannibals' self-control. Challenging his listeners with their own ignorance, Marlow continues to question their ability to relate to, or sympathize with, his story: "You can't understand? How could you –with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums—how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammeled feet may take him

into by the way of solitude" (49). He reiterates the narrative trope of the policeman and butcher, but expands on it to include other bastions of society. These are all the forces that contribute to civilization and, Marlow imagines, restrain the behavior of individuals to fit into the patterns of European humanity.

Marlow seems to subscribe to Thomas Huxley's supposition that "Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage" ("Evolution and Ethics" 92). Natural selection or the natural order derives from what Huxley calls the "cosmic process," which is opposed by Marlow's gallows and asylum as specific incarnations of "laws and moral precepts." Within a polity, these forces check, or restrain, the processes of natural selection by enforcing the repression of a person's competitive instincts. However, the behavior of the supposedly "brutal" savages Marlow encounters belies Huxley's binary opposition of civilization and nature. Marlow, like Huxley, imagines the ethical behavior encouraged by these social institutions as working against the self-assertion necessary for success in the cosmic struggle. Huxley remarked of moral behavior that "in place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest" as to the greater good ("Evolution and Ethics" 91). Marlow imagines that, outside of civilization, man is "untrammeled" by community and returns to a prehistoric age governed only by his competitive instinct. The cannibals' abstinence, according to Huxley's precept that "the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilization," indicates the presence of a more sophisticated social infrastructure than the Euro-

peans and Marlow were aware of (91). Rather than living in bestial competition, the cannibals are guided by an unknown code. The fact that the natives are not living amorally in a state opposing civilization undermines the Europeans' claims to be bringing morality to the jungle.

Darwin and Huxley suggest that, to a certain extent, ethical behavior is a system woven from the mundane institutions of a community and, ensuring the ability of humankind to live collaboratively and survive and prosper as a species, demands the suppression of a human being's competitive drives. Marlow lectures his listeners regarding these social constructs, asserting that "These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness" (49). Marlow imagines that moral behavior occurs because society consistently demands righteous conduct from its constituents. Without society, and the deployment of external incentives, a human being's grasp on this evolved state is weak. Marlow's experience with Kurtz suggests that falling back on individual strength and faithfulness is unreliable. His inquiry as to how his listeners could understand his story seems to imply that, if given the opportunity, most individuals would lapse from ethical behavior.

Marlow's supposition of the inevitable ethical decay enacted by the jungle is foreshadowed early in his tale, soon after he receives his post and attempts to recover the corpse of his predecessor. He recounts the second-hand story, telling his listeners that the Dane, Fresleven, had been trading for two hens with the chief of a village and, feeling himself cheated in some way, had attacked the chief. Marlow tells his listeners that "it didn't surprise me in the least to hear this and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was, but he had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-

respect in some way. Therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly" (9). Marlow suggests that work in the Congo, separated from the European community, inevitably overcame even the most self-restrained of individuals. Fresleven's long employ outside the reach of law and morality was enough to cause more altruistic behaviors, such as gentleness, to decay. Thus, Fresleven's "self-respect" correlates to the competitive urge that in what Huxley calls "the State of Nature" runs rampant, aiding the individual in the struggle for existence. Marlow intends to instill in his listeners what he thinks is the moral of jungle life: not just that survival of the fittest is the law of Nature, but that any individual, outside of society, becomes subject to the gusts of instinct that govern the turmoil.

However, the effects of the struggle between Fresleven, the chief, and the chief's son undermine Huxley and Marlow's assumption that the Congo and its inhabitants exist in an unrestricted State of Nature. Soon after Fresleven's death, "the village was deserted, the huts gaped black, rotting all askew within the fallen enclosures. A calamity had come to it, sure enough. The people had vanished. Mad terror had scattered them, men, women, and children, through the bush and they had never returned. What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow" (9). The struggle for the limited resources available and the resulting violence destroy the village's life. Much as Moreau's bloody death precipitates the unraveling of the Beast People's orderly village, violence from European tampering destroys this tribal populace. Fresleven's self-assertion precipitated a corresponding response from the tribesmen and thus demonstrates Huxley's claim that unchecked self-assertion is disastrous to culture. Much as Prendick dismisses the humanity of the Beast People and mocks their rituals, the Europeans disregard the social systems of the tribes in the Congo. Huts are permanent domestic dwelling spaces, and the village is ruled by an authority figure who governs the tribe.

Although these are attributes of an organized community, the Europeans only think of the village as empty darkness to be colonized.

Despite the controversy over *Heart of Darkness*'s at times uncomfortably racist portrayal of native Africans, Conrad's novella shone a bright light on the brutality of the self-proclaimed missionaries of civilization. As in the case of the cannibals, the Europeans do not recognize the community preceding their "noble cause," or their efforts at expansion. Understanding the native villagers as brutal, lawless savages enables them to think of their own mission as progress. This belief is articulated when, prior to leaving Europe, Marlow met with his aunt, who "talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,' till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit" (Conrad 12). Marlow sees his aunt not only as emblematic of the female view, but also of the general European population's conception of Marlow and others like him as doing the work of an "emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time" (12). Marlow condescends to his aunt and mocks her moralizing by exaggerating her esteem of him so that he appears to her a "lower sort of apostle," which implicates Christianity in his derision. Marlow's later dismissal of the settlers' religiosity and his aunt's moral elitism echoes Prendick's attitude in the conclusion of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* that "it seemed to me the preacher gibbered Big Thinks even as the Ape Man had done" (Wells 131). Wells and Conrad suggest that traditional systems of morality, rather than signifying the pinnacle of evolution, are merely reminders of the need to curtail humankind's intrinsic animal nature.

Huxley introduces his lecture "Evolution and Ethics" with an invocation of Britain's history similar to Marlow's own introduction to his tale, stating that "It may be safely assumed that,

two thousand years ago, before Caesar set foot in southern Britain, the whole country-side visible from the windows of the room in which I write, was in what is called 'the state of nature'." (Huxley 38). Huxley goes on to suggest that Britain's countryside must have been, "as that of Central Africa now is" (39). Many scholars, including Alan Hunter, note the similarity between Huxley's comparison and Marlow's words. Huxley connects Britain's prehistoric past and Africa to underline the continous process of change. The only constant feature of the universe, according to Huxley, is the process of natural selection through "the struggle for existence" (40). Marlow develops the connection between Africa and pre-civilized times throughout his journey, later stating that "We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly as we struggled round a bend there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs" (Conrad 35). Although Marlow tries to imagine his group as "the first," they are immediately confronted with the untruth of that claim. Not only people, but dwellings and communities appear suddenly, as if conjured to undermine the grandiose delusion. The description resembles Huxley's, suggesting that, for Conrad also, the struggle for existence is still ongoing. The English have forgotten that their country was also once "one of the dark places of the earth" (Conrad 5), that they, too, share this "inheritance" of animal instinct. Like Prendick's interrogation of human heritage, Marlow raises the question of European heritage. Both narrators undermine the belief in man's exemption from nature's fierce conflicts. Rather than being bent to the will of the colonizers, the struggle is still around the bend, unsubdued. Moreover, human beings must "toil" and experience "anguish" and fight to "subdue"

nature, suggesting that humanity cannot claim immunity from the struggle because it is still clearly immersed in the natural process.

As I have stated previously, sympathy as the ethical foundation of civilization is opposed to the struggle for existence because it suppresses the urges of self-interest. Huxley diverges from Darwin to argue that "self-restraint, the essence of the ethical process, which is no less an essential condition of the existence of every polity, may, by excess, become ruinous to it" (58). The ability to sympathize with fellow human beings enables the individual to restrain him or herself from behaving solely in the interest of individual survival. Huxley suggests though, that given complete reign, sympathy would preclude any punishment worse "than the turning of the other cheek" to those who break the law, leading finally to "the negation of law by the refusal to put it in motion against law-breakers" (59). Huxley's conception of civilized justice emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between "the case of involuntary and willful misdeed; between a merely wrong action and a guilty one" (75). Huxley proposes that justice is the force enabling the formulation of the most complex civilizations. In *Heart of Darkness*, the Company's pursuits in the Congo are not governed by the forces of justice. Marlow's observations about the absence of the policeman and the gallows convey the Company's hollowness.

Marlow's ironic admission that "After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings" calls attention to the obvious cruelty he witnesses in the colonial enterprise (Conrad 16). The chain-gangs of native Africans toiling at the Company's station

> were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial sur-

> roundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest (17).

Marlow observes Africans essentially being forced into labor without the benefits of medicine or proper nourishment. Although these contracts are classified as legal, his description of the resulting senseless deaths fissures justice from legality. Unequivocally, Marlow asserts that the Africans do not fit into the categories of the justice system that would rationalize such punishment. The men of the chain-gang are as "free as air—and nearly as thin," and Marlow notes that they are only unshackled once their bodies are too weak to allow them to do more than crawl (17). Their lack of freedom as they are co-opted against their will into labor is painfully evident. They are manacled by the forces that claim to be there for their enlightenment and then are abused in an era when the slave trade has supposedly been abolished.

In contrast to the powerless Africans is Kurtz, who from his position of authority within the Company participates in similar abuses of local tribes. Previous criticism has compared Kurtz to the "administrative authority" of Huxley's "Evolution and Ethics." Stanley Renner asserts that, in this role, Kurtz undergoes an atavistic moral collapse and is undone by his bestial urges. However, the source of Kurtz's downfall, his failure to restrain himself from satisfying his desires, deserves greater emphasis. Marlow's testimony regarding Kurtz's degradation and the horrifying violence that he has perpetrated highlights Marlow's assertion that beliefs will not suffice in the wilderness. Kurtz's willingness to commit atrocities against his fellow human beings signals his deficiency of sympathy. Like Huxley's "administrative authority" and Wells's Moreau, Kurtz's method of wielding power has led to the suppression of sympathy, the most important of instincts. Marlow tells his audience that he

> had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him—himself—his own exalted and incredible degradation. 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. He was alone—and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air (66).

With regard to the commonly held social assumptions of the time, Marlow's reaction to Kurtz surprisingly minimizes his connection with Kurtz, a fellow European, in favor of aligning himself with the Africans. Kurtz's complete disregard for any single thing or claim other than his own desires isolates him from appeals to his humanity. Responding to this disconnection, Marlow's frustrated shout of "Confound the man" echoes his expression of irritation regarding his "fool-helmsman" (45). This helmsman, like Kurtz, had the great flaw of lacking restraint, which similarly contributed to his death. The two characters, despite their seeming disparity, have both been severed from bonds to fellow human beings.

Huxley's texts place man in nature and imply that the earth, in addition to society, binds men. By refusing these limitations, by kicking himself out of man's place in nature and on earth, Kurtz calls into question the nature of his humanity. His willingness to enact his proposition that the Europeans "appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings'" overlooks his own status as a human being. For a man to act supernatural or above the natural order, he must repress the reality of his humanity to deny the fact that his place *is* in nature. Kurtz justifies the lie by its ability to enable the Europeans to exert "a power for good practically unbounded" (50). Even for the sake of actions toward the "good," however, the state of being unbound is corrupt-

ing. Kurtz's denial of his humanity and, consequently, accountability emphasize the impossibility of unlimited altruism.

In "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley emphasizes the importance of restraint to society. Human beings must be able to limit their behavior in the interest of the well-being of their comrades. Thus, Marlow's assertion that "I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself," implies that Kurtz's behavior is unnatural (66). Once again, Kurtz is not described as a human being with a body, but as a soul, an incorporeal entity. Marlow's sense of Kurtz as an impossibility is heightened by his description of Kurtz as not only a "mystery," or something unknown, but also as something "inconceivable." Kurtz has transgressed the bounds of society and has ceased to recognize any of the restraints of societal obligations through which Marlow can relate to him. Hence, Marlow cannot conceive of him. Kurtz's renunciation of his biological humanity through assuming the role of a god or devil not only denies his own mortality, but also removes him from the chain of sympathetic relation. He fails to fulfill Darwin's claim regarding ethics, which is that ultimately a human will be able to behave morally without the censure of his/her fellows.

Thus, Kurtz enacts the dangers Huxley predicted would beset the administrative authority: that his life would be directed toward the suppression of sympathy, so that he would have "no conscience, nor any restraint," simply the "calculation of self-interest" ("Evolution and Ethics" 62). Huxley's warning against such all-consuming self-interest is echoed in Marlow's description of Kurtz's complete lack of restraint, which in turn is a more extreme echo of the briefly mentioned Fresleven's. Like Fresleven, who asserted himself to insert a "my" in front of the disputed chickens, Kurtz obsesses over "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my…' everything belonged to him" (48). His obsessive greed and possessiveness demonstrate the

competitive drive in full, unrestricted throttle and reveal that an individual human cannot serve as censure for himself.

In "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley suggests that restraint and sympathy both contribute to society's ethical system. Marlow's decision to lie to Kurtz's Intended upon his return to civilization interrogates the notion of what is "good" versus what is for the "good of the community." Upon telling the Intended that Kurtz's last words were her name, Marlow wonders: "It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due? Hadn't he said he wanted only justice? But I couldn't. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark" (77). Here Marlow further deconstructs the dichotomous relationship between the darkness of the African jungle and the light that is civilization. Marlow, like most of his contemporaries, conceives of the darkness as a place where men behave according to animal nature rather than ethics. Conversely, the light is where human beings know better, and they behave according to ethics. His concern that the heavens would "fall upon my head" invokes a fear of retribution from a divine authority. Such a divinely ordained ethical system would be absolute, not relative to society. However, Marlow suggests that the truth would be "too dark." His statement aligns honesty, which is typically seen as a virtue, with an adjective more normally associated with amoral behavior. The incident effectively dislocates the foundation of ideals, morality, from universal significance.

In addition to contradicting his ideals, Marlow feels he has also denied Kurtz the justice that Kurtz claimed to desire. Huxley asserts the importance of justice to society, wondering of a community without it: "What would become of the garden if the gardener treated all the weeds and slugs and birds and trespassers as he would like to be treated, if he were in their place?" (59).

Huxley's statement underlines his contention that ethics, or the "golden rule," as the sole governing force would be deleterious to society. Conrad, like Huxley, distinguishes between what is typically considered "good" and what is salutary to civilization. Rather than a moral center, civilization is dependent on the machinations of the justice system. From the beginning of the novella, Marlow undermines the assumptions of his aunt and the many like-minded individuals who conflate society's operations with the function of ethics. He suggests the limitations of the light to operate in a way that is totally "good," by suggesting that "the sunlight can be made to lie too" (Conrad 72). He ventures that the Company operates for "profit." In the end, his tally of losses and gains inquires what type of benefit has been gained. In Marlow's narrative, the profit of civilization does not seem to be the end result of events in the Congo.

Ultimately, Marlow's decision to relay his experience in the jungle only to a close group of sympathetic friends enables readers to draw a distinction between the narrator and Conrad as the author. Outside the frame of *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad chose to publish the tale to the general public despite its social ramifications. Despite this difference between narrator and author, Conrad never treats Marlow with the contempt Wells occasionally offers Prendick. The failures of Kurtz and the Company in the Congo indict Huxley for using evolution to support the rhetoric of colonial expansion. Conrad's tale demonstrates that rather than benefiting European society, the violence necessitated by Imperialism harms both the "civilized" individuals enacting it and the "savage" inhabitants of Africa. Conrad's allusion to Huxley implies his culpability and demonstrates how Huxley's own argument foreshadows the collapse of the distinction between "civilized" and not.

5 Conclusion

Within these two novellas, Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells focus on evolution's implications for traditional systems of value. In *The Descent of Man* and "Evolution and Ethics," Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley suggest that restraint and altruistic behavior, crucial aspects of morality, developed out of social necessity. Huxley states that "the ethical process is in opposition to the principle of the cosmic process" ("Evolution and Ethics" 58). He further observes that in response to nature's amorality, "the conscience of man revolted against the moral indifference of nature, and the microcosmic atom should have found the illimitable macrocosm guilty" (76). Huxley's conclusion on morality facilitates the English justification of their Imperialist endeavors by preserving their position as spreading morality to a deficient world.

Through Prendick's narration, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* resists Huxley's conceptualization of ethics by depicting the failure of sympathy. In the final passage, Prendick turns to the study of chemistry and astronomy for "a sense of infinite peace and protection in the glittering hosts of heaven," while hoping to develop man's higher nature by striving to understand "the vast and eternal laws of matter" (131). As Moreau did in his island laboratory, Prendick rejects the company of others, choosing a life of isolation that disputes the association of man's higher nature with normative morality. Huxley suggests that a human being will always be in a state of internal conflict, with his/her ethical impulses opposing the more aggressive instincts evolved through the struggle for existence. By understanding the "eternal laws of matter" or, in Huxley's words, the cosmic process, Prendick strives to better understand the essence of humanity apart from the fluctuations of daily life. The novel ends without Prendick finding the knowledge or answers he seeks. He is no closer to insight into transcending the human condition and there is

no indication that he ever will realize his desire. Prendick's final ignorance and isolated search demonstrate Wells's objection to Huxley's severance of ethics from nature.

The sense of incompletion in the conclusion of Wells's text contrasts with the end of *Heart of Darkness.* Conrad completes his frame narrative so that at the beginning and end, Marlow adopts a Buddha-like pose as he sits, surrounded by friends. Like Prendick, Marlow is initially disgusted with fellow human beings upon his return to London. Both men are harrowed by their experience outside the folds of civilization, yet Marlow returns to a community of friends. Conrad's decision to twice describe Marlow's seated posture as resembling that of the Buddha alludes to Huxley's praise of the Buddha: "it is a remarkable indication of the subtlety of Indian speculation that Gautama should have seen deeper than the greatest of modern idealists" ("Evolution and Ethics" 81). Marlow's association with the Buddha lends his tale greater authority. Like the Buddha, he has achieved enlightenment regarding the human condition. While Prendick is left searching for wisdom, Marlow seems to have arrived at a point of insight through his return to humanity.

Unlike Wells's conclusion, in which Prendick commits the same fallacies as Moreau, Conrad preserves Marlow within a sympathetic frame. Thus, Conrad asserts the importance of sympathy. That the Buddha is not a deity, but a man who achieves enlightenment, safe-guards Marlow from committing Kurtz's errors of assuming divine authority and severing himself from sympathetic ties to fellow human beings. Instead of the authoritarian justice that Huxley advocates and that Kurtz administered, Marlow's narrative affirms the prevalence of altruism. Marlow's association with the Buddha, a figure originating outside of English culture, continues Conrad's strategy of treating the ideals of morality and ethics as independent of European culture. Conrad undermines Huxley's conceptualization of ethics as aligned with European civiliza-

tion's resistance of nature through Marlow's experience of the Company's corruption in the Congo.

In the preceding thesis I have compared Thomas Huxley and Charles Darwin's descriptions of evolutionary ethics to illuminate their interaction in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* Recently, Carrie Rohman has questioned the success of historicist criticism in the application of Darwinism, suggesting that in this regard "historicist readings have proven inadequate to the task of illuminating the complexities of the subject's relation to animality" (8). Without disregarding the value of the unique perspective of Rohman's psychoanalytic reading, the preceding thesis has employed the historical lens of nineteenth-century evolutionary theory to illuminate the specific conversation that Wells and Conrad were responding to. The fact that Huxley and Darwin both incorporate ethics into their accounts of humankind's evolution reveals a great deal about how late-Victorians conceived of the human subject. More than an opposable thumb or a particularly large frontal lobe, morality is portrayed as the distinguishing feature of humanity. Thus, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *Heart of Darkness* challenge their audiences by depicting evolutionary ethics exceeding the bounds of "civilized" subjects. By employing a historical understanding of evolution, I clarify how *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *Heart of Darkness* challenge the definition imposed on altruism by Darwin and Huxley. Wells and Conrad's texts attack Huxley and Darwin's description of ethics with the terms of "sympathy" and "restraint" for their complicity in preserving Imperialist ideology.

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