

Island Encounters: Intercultural Communication in the Western Literary Tradition

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According to postcolonial theory, the stereotype of intercultural communication between Western and 'Other' cultures since the voyages of discovery has been a colonial encounter. Although some postcolonial critics (for example Brantlinger 1988:173; Smith 1985:317f) distinguish between later nineteenth-century contact and earlier exchanges, the tendency is to generalise. Robinson Crusoe's interaction with Friday and Prospero's with Caliban, which surely predate the period of high imperialism, are widely regarded as archetypes of the colonial relationship (Mannoni 1956:passim; Fanon 1986:36,107; Baker 1985:389; Cartelli 1987:101). These characters' encounter is not of course a meeting of equals but the preface to a master-servant relationship. The scenario is an island and the protagonists strangers, one of whom is indigenous and the other a visitor from a distant land. The visitor takes command because he possesses magic or an apparently 'natural' superiority and, although he rules the island and his 'subject' for a time, his real aim is to return 'home' whence he came.

What I intend to do in this paper is to anatomise the island archetype, showing that it has been rather too simplistically constructed. The mythology of islands is older than Shakespeare and does not have to demonstrate the dominance of the stranger. As recent critics have shown, postcolonial theory has led us to find colonialism under every bed and to read the imperialism of the late nineteenth century into all texts, often quite anachronistically (Brotton 1998:29; Johnson 1998:231). An examination of some canonical island texts demonstrates that these stories often reverse or vary quite unexpectedly the stereotypical pattern of colonial relationships. This is true even of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but much more of Homer's *Odyssey*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Byron's *The Island*. Later texts—from the mid-nineteenth century into the early twentieth century—do react to the growing pressure of imperialism and racism, as an

examination of Melville's *Typee* and Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands* may demonstrate. However, none of these is a simple model of colonialism in miniature. Perhaps we may conclude that colonialism has never been simple, or that it is merely one manifestation of a wide continuum of possible encounters between Others.

The condition of being on an island is to be *isolated* (a word deriving from the Latin *insula*, island) and hence to have any relationship made singular and significant. In Western mythology, islands are usually distant places, the objects either of quest and discovery or of exile and deprivation. Avalon, Cythera, Utopia, the Blessed Isles and Atlantis are all versions of the first of these possibilities; Lemnos and the islands of Circe and the Cyclops are versions of the second. To Christopher Columbus, Paradise itself was an island which had broken off from the mainland and floated off into the west where he might—perhaps—rediscover it (Sandford 1928: 27,36-55). The island resembles other symbols of male desire such as the secluded garden, except that its desirable secrets are guarded not by dragon or wall but by that great emblem of mystery and power, the sea. Thus, island stories invariably include voyage narratives which effectively place the island of quest beyond the quotidian horizon, contributing thereby to the Otherness of characters and events.

This Otherness is directly related to the island's ambivalence as a symbol. For what is distant and exotic, enchanting and full of delightful mystery, may, with a small sleight of hand, turn out to be frighteningly foreign and alienating, a cause of loneliness and homesickness, the psychological manifestations of *isolation*.

Odysseus is the Western original of the voyager, to whom islands, however enticing, are always in the end places of sorrow and isolation. For his quest is to sail *beyond* the islands to his final destination: home. (The journey home is called a *nostos*.) Hence, the time he spends on islands is a time of displacement, or even imprisonment, as in the case of the islands of the Cyclops and of Circe. Yet even when the island is as beautiful and inviting as Calypso's, the 'navel of the seas', presided over by the love-struck goddess herself, Odysseus is in exile there (Homer 1980:2). Calypso and her island are in the long run little different from Circe and hers, or the Sirens and their rocks, for all of them offer a dangerous temptation and their enchantment must be avoided by the quester passing through. On Calypso's island, Odysseus relapses into a childlike *nostalgia*, sitting at the edge of the sea, weeping as despondently as Philoctetes on Lemnos (Sophocles 1913:391,421). But this unmanly behaviour is in the end justified, for eventually the goddess takes pity on him and allows him to voyage onward, leaving her behind, like Dido a supernumerary to the great male plan, her island a digression in the path of the journey's relentless purpose.

Thus, the island is an ambivalent symbol, a utopia or a dystopia or some combination of the two. A very particular mixture of delight and exile is required for

an island to be a suitable stage for the colonial encounter. The place must have desirable qualities to awaken the cupidity of the visitor, but he is in exile there, and must 'make do' with the materials at hand—including the indigenous inhabitants—in order to improvise a temporary home.

In the postcolonial version of the story, the island's inhabitants are not goddesses and their labour is necessary to make life on the island bearable for the visitor. It is significant that Odysseus does not colonise Calypso's island, because she is firmly in charge there. His idleness and nostalgia are in stark contrast to Prospero's and Crusoe's resourcefulness. And, in *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, Caliban and Friday are not only not deities, but they are flawed beings—at least, in the eyes of their overlords. Although Prospero and Crusoe teach their servants to speak English and attempt to 'civilize' them, neither master is convinced that this process will ever be complete. According to orthodox postcolonial theory, the Fanonian hierarchical dichotomies of white/black, civilised/savage, good/evil, self/Other come into being out of the unequal power distribution of this relationship, in which the superiority of the first term in each pair can be asserted by more advanced technology—or, in the case of Prospero, magic (Fanon 1986:132-38; JanMahomed 1985:82). But, of course, the dichotomies are also a matter of belief. If Calypso is a goddess and not a savage island maiden, it is at least partly because Odysseus believes her to be so.

The Tempest and *Robinson Crusoe* certainly include Western protagonists who are confident of their superiority in some respects and make use of their islands in ways not necessary to Odysseus. But even these texts are imperfect models of colonialism. In *The Tempest*, Caliban may be drawn from Renaissance views of New World inhabitants but, on the other hand, his mother is possessed of supernatural powers, is 'blue-eyed' (1.2.269) and is said to have mated with 'the devil himself' in order to conceive him (1.3.319). Caliban, in other words, can be seen as a kind of demon, a 'born devil' (4.1.188) or quasi-supernatural being, rather than a human native. This view of him is supported by his great and poetic affinity with the island itself and all its 'qualities': its 'fresh springs, brine-pits, barren places and fertile' (1.2.26f). He is like a minor spirit of place, knowing the isle's many secrets and hearing all its 'noises/ Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not' (3.2.118f) unperceived by others.

Caliban's affinities to the island are more likely to be magical than inherited, for he is, in any case, not really indigenous to it. His mother Sycorax was banished there from Argier when she was pregnant with him. Sycorax is a kind of first colonist, for she enslaves the island's true inhabitant, Ariel, and when he proves disobedient she imprisons him in a tree (1.2.263-281), regarding herself as owner of the place (1.2.331).

Prospero of course makes Ariel as well as Caliban into a servant, but his relationship with Ariel does not map neatly into a realistic master-slave one at all and belongs, according to Jerry Brotton in a recent article, more to the old magus tradition than to any colonial myth (Brotton 1998:29). Ariel cannot by any stretch of the imagination be equated with the indigenous people of any known land. He belongs unambivalently to the spirit world and can change his shape at will, speed through air, earth, water or fire and create calm or tempest on the very ocean (1.2.189-237). In Elizabethan terms, it would be difficult for the human master of a spirit such as Ariel—or even, perhaps, Caliban—to claim for himself any racial superiority to his servant, considering the hierarchies of the Great Chain of Being that place spirit above matter.

Robinson Crusoe, too, is problematic as a colonial text, perhaps mainly because of Crusoe's great affection for Friday—and, by Crusoe's account, Friday's affection for him. Although at one stage this mutual love is compared, in the orthodox colonial way, to the relationship between 'Child' and 'Father' (Defoe 1975:151), at others it seems to approximate an ideal marriage. Crusoe reminisces about

... the three Years which we liv'd there together perfectly and completely Happy, if any such Thing as compleat happiness can be found in a sublunary State (Defoe 1975:159).

This kind of homosocial bliss does not resemble most people's image of a colonial relationship.

True, Friday has no actual voice in the discourse, but Crusoe, in his love for Friday, makes great attempts to *know* him through his actions and words, and love is surely the great deconstructor of Otherness. Even initially, Friday offers himself to Crusoe (by placing his head under Crusoe's foot) not because he recognises an innate superiority in Crusoe, but because Crusoe has just saved him from certain death (Defoe 1975:147). Early on in their relationship, watching Crusoe's cooking arrangements, Friday 'took so many ways to tell me how well he lik'd it, that I could not but understand him' (Defoe 1975:154). Because of the gratuitous repetitions, it is hard to believe that Crusoe could be misinterpreting or over-interpreting Friday here. But Friday does not simply accept Crusoe's eating habits as an improvement on his old cannibalistic ones. Crusoe never manages to persuade him to take salt with his meat, despite some amusing efforts (Defoe 1975:153). On a later occasion, Crusoe records that Friday

... looks very earnestly towards the Main Land, and in a kind of Surprise,

falls a jumping and dancing, and calls out to me, for I was at some Distance from him: I ask'd him, What was the Matter? *O Joy!* Says he, *O glad! There see my Country, there my Nation!* (Defoe 1975:161).

When Crusoe assumes from this outburst that Friday wishes to return to his own 'Country' and 'Nation', abandoning Crusoe, he is mistaken; in fact, Crusoe confesses, he 'wrong'd the poor honest Creature very much, for which [he, Crusoe,] was very sorry afterwards' (Defoe 1975:162). In other words, Crusoe's close observation of Friday can lead to a revision of an earlier assumption. Friday, even though he comes across to the reader as the *object* of careful, almost scientific scrutiny, is in fact a *subject*, since he is not predictable and operates from a position of freedom—freedom from Crusoe's compulsion and full understanding, among other things. Looked at thus closely, the Crusoe-Friday relationship is just not the simplistic exploiter-exploited model that some theorists would have us believe.

Perhaps the most extreme refutation of the hierarchical oppositions between the Western traveller and the island Other takes place in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, written within a few years of *Robinson Crusoe*. The encounter in question is part of Gulliver's last, most significant voyage, the one that sets the tone for the rest of his life: 'A Voyage to the Country of the *Houyhnhnms*'. In the course of this narrative, the explorer meets a community of Others who so overwhelm him with their superiority to his own people and culture that he develops a nauseous loathing for his own that takes him years to reverse. Even as the book ends, he can permit his wife to dine with him only at the opposite end of a long table and is still unable to bear any human touch.

Of course, the *Houyhnhnms* who so impress Gulliver with their peace, beauty and wisdom are not—in shape, at least—human. Thus, Gulliver's desire to dissolve their Otherness and identify with them is doomed to failure. He is forced to recognise that he is not a *Houyhnhnm* but a Yahoo. The Yahoos—whom he actually encounters on the same island before he meets his first noble, horse-like *Houyhnhnm*—are described from the start in terms that one might be tempted to call racist were they not more extreme than this. Their description actually degrades the human to the level of the animal:

They had no tails nor any hair at all on their buttocks except about the anus, which I presume nature had placed there to defend them as they sat on the ground; for this posture they used, as well as lying down, and often stood on their hind feet (Swift 1969:253f).

The irony of this of course is that no *animal* is so debased; in fact, the noblest beings

on the island are considered mere 'animals' elsewhere. And the irony for Gulliver of this pseudo-scientific 'Othering' discourse is that he must in the end recognise that he himself is 'in every limb and feature' a 'real Yahoo' (Swift 1969:303). He does not for this desist from using the 'Othering' discourse in describing his own species, since his admiration of the Houyhnhnms has led him to adopt their standards of judgement, and so he is forced into a self-loathing that makes him horrified even to catch sight of his own reflection (Swift 1969:316).

In his existence on the island of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver not only does not enslave anyone but he regards himself as a 'servant' to his 'master', the benevolent Houyhnhnm who adopts him. Gulliver has no desire to return to England, and would by his own wish stay forever in his adopted 'home' were the General Assembly of Houyhnhnms not to send him packing. His return to his country of origin is so little like a homecoming that he spends five years and more attempting to acclimatise himself to the lifestyle that he hates and the human company that sickens him.

Byron's *The Island*, a less well-known text than *Gulliver's Travels*, subverts the colonial stereotype in a similar way, though from a more Romantic perspective. The island dwellers here are not horses but truly Noble Savages. The story has a happy ending, because the male hero, Torquil, never returns to Britain but stays in his acquired 'home', the island of Toobonai, to live happily ever after with Neuha, his island bride. This island is a true earthly paradise, where the curse on Adam does not apply, and the island community lives in peace and harmony without having to till the soil, so great is the abundance provided by Nature for their taking. One reason why Torquil and the other Bounty mutineers never desire to exploit this island is that they have no other home. They are declared right at the beginning to be 'Men without country' who, having wandered too long, have no further affinity with their place of birth (1:29-30). Reversing the Biblical story, they commit a forbidden act—mutiny—in order to enter this 'savage' Eden. There is no way back to the fallen world of so-called 'civilization', since retribution in the form of British Naval law awaits them there in the form of a court-martial and probable death by hanging.

Of course, the mutineers are pursued even into Eden by the long arm of this law and all except Torquil are killed by the logic of crime and punishment that pertains not only in law but also in the plots of fiction—and particularly in the plots of Byronic tales centring on moody, Satanic heroes like Christian in this poem. For *The Island*, insofar as it concerns the Bounty mutiny, is a typical Byronic tale of rebellion and retribution. Christian rises against Bligh and is punished, just as Satan is by God in the master-text of the Romantic age, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

However, this poem deals rather briefly with the mutiny and is, in fact, one of Byron's late rewritings of the retribution stories of his early popularity (Addison

1995:703f). The Oedipal struggle between Christian and Bligh is backgrounded in *The Island* by the idyll of young love in the foreground. And although I have called Torquil the 'male hero' of the poem, in fact the hero is not male. As I have argued elsewhere, the hero of *The Island* is Neuha, who is perhaps Byron's perfect human being, a woman, black and so young that she is still almost a child (Addison 1995:701-703). 'Savage' in the noblest sense of perfect innocence and authenticity, she 'civilize[s]' her 'half-savage', 'half uncivilized' boy by teaching him peace and happiness, 'wean[ing]' him from violence and 'tam[ing]' his restlessness (2:123, 2:271, 2:304, 1:31, 2:307, 2:312). He, on the other hand, teaches her 'passion's desolating joy' (2:112) and they celebrate not their Otherness but their island-born sameness in an all-embracing love that dissolves the distances between them. However, this is not in the end a relationship of absolute equality. Neuha is dominant, taking the initiative and rescuing Torquil from his own vengeful countrymen. She saves him by leading him to an underwater cave—a place of female sexuality and delight—and allowing him to emerge only after danger is passed.

Torquil's rebirth from under the waves and subsequent full acceptance into the island community gives him a new identity that is no longer in any respect European. He is more colonised than colonising in this transformation, because he is the more passive party. His beloved Neuha makes him her choice and desire. And, as the rather talkative narrator makes quite explicit, the islanders and their lifestyle are in any case superior to all things Western. Early on, he writes:

True, they had vices—such are Nature's growth—
But only the Barbarian's—we have both:
The sordor of civilization, mixed
With all the savage which man's fall hath fixed (2.67-70).

Later he loses the 'us' and 'them' perspective, and narrates to a large extent via native focalisers. The arrival of the first Western ships, for example, is seen (in a flashback) through Neuha's eyes. She perceives them as 'thunder-bearing strangers In vast canoes Topped with tall trees ... loftier than the palm' (2.220-222). But she is no gaping natural and is capable of judgement. She observes the huge ship's dangerously 'trampling bulk' and thinks that it '[makes] the very billows look less free' (2.234,227). Increasingly, as Neuha gains in prestige in the later part of the story, hers becomes in this way the viewpoint of the narrator, gradually displacing his positionality as a European observer. Eventually the narrative seems either to become a 'tale untold' or to identify itself with the oral story of "'Neuha's Cave'" that is mentioned at the end as entering the literary repertoire of the inhabitants of

Toobonai (4:414), being told and retold in the island context and not belonging to Europe at all.

It is instructive to compare the economy of *The Island* (1823) with that of Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846), to which Byron's poem is a significant precursor. In *Typee*, the attitude of the narrator-hero, Tommo, if not his actions, is decidedly more colonial than anything observable in the earlier text. Like Torquil, Tommo 'goes native' on a Pacific island and develops a relationship with an attractive island woman. However, Torquil is not a narrator, nor even an important focaliser, and he therefore has none of Tommo's opportunities to describe the islanders' lifestyle. Tommo takes an anthropologist's pains in his depictions of Typee life and his viewpoint is decidedly Western. In his favour, however, he does make efforts to debunk the 'civilized/ savage' hierarchy. He draws a number of comparisons between European and Typee customs that demonstrate the superiority of the latter. Retaining, for the benefit of his Western readers, the gallant's jocular chivalry of tone, he writes thus of women in Typee society:

... if the degree of consideration in which the ever-adorable sex is held by the men be—as the philosophers affirm—a just criterion of the degree of refinement among a people, then I may truly pronounce the Typees to be as polished a community as ever the sun shone upon (Melville 1938:210).

And he finds this 'refinement' to be no mere affectation but an outward sign of a deeply-held considerateness that runs through all communal relationships among the Typee. 'During my whole stay on the island', he claims,

I never witnessed a single quarrel, nor anything that in the slightest degree approached even to a dispute. The natives appeared to form one household whose members were bound together by the ties of strong affection (Melville 1938:211).

Stressing constantly the beauty and general happiness of these people, Tommo at times perceives even cannibalism as not so terrible a custom when compared with the atrocities practised by apparently 'polished countries' (Melville 1938:212; Herbert 1980:172).

And Tommo's affections for the Typee are not only general and communal. He becomes, as he coyly puts it, the 'declared admirer' of Fayaway, a 'gentle being' possessed not only of 'extraordinary beauty' but also of singular 'intelligence and humanity' (Melville 1938:146,118). Like the other Typee 'young females', Fayaway is superior to European women, according to Tommo, because she does not

'[display] the ridiculous affectations of gentility, nor yet [move] in whalebone corsets' but 'for the most part [clings] to the primitive and summer garb of Eden' (Melville 1938:137,94).

But Fayaway cannot compare with Neuha in importance either in her story or in the esteem of her Western lover, since she is merely an episode in both. Her viewpoint is never presented to the reader for sharing and she does not constitute for Tommo a reason for remaining on the island. Her main purpose in the story seems to be for the delectation of the voyeuristic reader. In a significant episode she disrobes in Tommo's canoe 'spreading [her garment] out like a sail' and standing 'erect with upraised arms', eliciting the remark: 'a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped aboard any craft' (Melville 1938:145). Mindful of the squeamishness of his nineteenth-century Western readership, Melville omits any direct mention of Fayaway's exposed body parts, but enough of the picture is sketched in for the rest to be supplied by the lustful imagination.

And Melville's deconstruction of the 'civilized/ savage' dichotomy is not as thorough as Byron's. Byron consistently reverses the value of these terms, so that, while 'civilization' is coupled with 'sordor' (2:69), 'savagery' is associated with nobility, culture and gentleness (2:214-217,79-102,39). Tommo nearly always uses these terms in their traditional sense, referring to the Typees as 'savage' and to Westerners as 'civilized'. According to Herbert (1980:172), Tommo remains finally ambivalent about both 'savagery' and 'civilization', but this ambivalence does not in the long run affect his situation and actions. Despite claiming Typee society as in many ways ideal, he never loses his fear of their cannibalistic practices and is all along in fact a prisoner among them. He seizes the opportunity of escape, in a clear and immediate choice of 'civilization', however flawed, over 'savagery'. After his escape, he of course returns 'home', in the traditional way, to recount his experiences and, we must infer, to publish and benefit financially from them. Thus, though he does not exploit the Typees while he is on their island, he does do so by writing about them on his return.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the action of 'going native', which is the topic of most of the texts discussed in this paper, caused increasing unease to the Western imagination (Herbert 1980:150f; Brantlinger 1988:39f). This unease was, according to certain postcolonial theorists, associated not only with the racist anthropology that broadly justified imperialism but also with the sexual repression of the age. Far from being 'noble' as earlier, Rousseauist perception would have them, savages were now much more likely to be seen by the growing evangelism of the later period as 'ignoble', 'in the spiritual darkness of their paganism' (Smith 1985:318). This was not simply a religious matter; the savage was in addition perceived both as more debased and as more sexually liberated than the civilized

person (Mannoni 1956:21; Brantlinger 1988:194f). Clearly this sexual liberation is present in Byron and Melville, but there it is associated with innocence and spontaneity and, at least in Byron, it offers the clearest proof of 'savagery's' superiority to 'civilization'.

To Joseph Conrad in *An Outcast of the Islands*—as in *Heart of Darkness*—'going native' is associated with 'degradation' and originates in Willems' 'step[ping] off the straight and narrow path of ... honesty' (Conrad 1992:126,123). His 'Outcast' situation and eventual death are brought about by a fatal passion for a 'savage woman' (Conrad 1992:127). Willems in his relations with the ethnic Other is constantly aware of his debasement, and his compulsive desire for the woman, Aissa, is intermixed with a violent disgust that is clearly a projection of his own self-loathing. He sees his desire as 'abominable' and suffers the 'contempt for himself' of a man who recognises himself as 'the slave of a passion he had always derided, as the man unable to assert his will' (Conrad 1992:128). This failure of will is, for Willems as for Kurtz, a collapse of 'civilized' values and it is only the last and most irremediable in a series of such collapses, starting with minor acts of dishonesty in business practice.

For Willems, like 'Lord Jim' in another of Conrad's tales, goes to live on his island because of a shameful episode in his past. Unlike Jim's exile, which is self-imposed and results in no debasement either of himself or of the local inhabitants, Willems' is more-or-less enforced. His benefactor sends him to the island of Sambir after his dishonesty is discovered. And his exile there deepens, since his liaison with Aissa compels him to shift his dwelling from the house he initially shares with Almayer, another European, to the 'native side' of the river. Sambir is not only a place of shame and exile for Willems, but it is also in its physical features undesirable. Unlike the sunny islands of earlier protagonists' delight, the outcast Willems' island has only a threatening, alienating beauty and its climate is potentially death-dealing. On the 'other' side of the river, where he waits for Aissa,

... the heat poured down from the sky, clung about the steaming earth, rolled among the trees, and wrapped up Willems in the soft, odorous folds of air heavy with the faint scent of blossoms and with the acrid smells of decaying life (Conrad 1992:74).

And, like the climate, Aissa proves intractable to his will; she will not even obey his command to take off her Muslim veil (Conrad 1992:128). In fact, far from obeying him, she uses his passion for her to gain 'influence' over him (Conrad 1992:333). Her involvement with him, as Gail Fraser (1996:139f) points out, can be seen as an

effort to gain a measure of control of her life—of any life—in a world dominated by Western colonial powers. Her power over this man amounts, in her fantasy, to power over all white men, whom she regards as all the same and all powerful. Early on, her impression is that 'He was bigger, stronger than any man she had seen before, and altogether different from all those she knew. He was of the victorious race' (Conrad 1992:75). And her triumph, later, is contingent on the belief that 'She had found a man of their race—and with all their qualities. All whites are alike' (Conrad 1992:333). To Willems, the knowledge that he has come under the control of a woman—a woman of 'inferior' race—is totally degrading and leads to his ultimate 'repulsion' and 'horror' of her, which, as Fraser (1996:141) notes, represent an intense, phobic racial hatred (Conrad 1992:285). One recalls Kurtz's echo of that 'horror' and his 'terrifying' footnote, 'Exterminate all the brutes!' (Conrad 1969:84,118).

Of course, the 'horror' of Willems' adopted life is, in a typical Conradian irony, not implicit in the 'savages' with whom he cohabits but in himself. Despite being as depraved and self-serving as he, they exist mainly as a backdrop to his corruption. His long-term dream is undoubtedly to subdue them to his own ends, but he does not succeed. Considering himself 'so civilized' and as belonging to the 'superior race' his ideal is to exist 'in a perpetual assurance' (given by members of other races) of his 'unquestionable superiority' (Conrad 1992:128,63,4). He would like to be a true colonist, exploiting the island and its inhabitants without ever naturalising himself by any adjustment of his own to Other customs or ways of thought. Although not harking after a distant homeland, his self-esteem is dependent on a sense of superiority to the indigenous Others which puts him always at a distance from them. However, not only does he not achieve this ideal, but he ends up himself subdued by the Other, subservient to Aissa's male overlords and betraying to them the secret of his European benefactor, Lingard. This humiliation is brought about by his own passions, by his lack of 'will', which is ironically a direct result of his inordinate cupidity, or will to possess and control.

Willems' abhorrence of the people with whom he cohabits on the island of Sambir is a far cry from Crusoe's fondness for the 'comely handsome' Friday (Defoe 1975:148), from Prospero's delight in the 'Fine apparition' of his 'quaint Ariel' (1:2:316), from Gulliver's deferential admiration for his rational and moral betters, and certainly from the rapturous wish-fulfilment of Byron and Melville in their descriptions of island beauties. Willems resembles Odysseus not on Calypso's, but on Circe's island, except that his evil thoughts turn the goddess, rather than himself, into something subhuman. Or perhaps he is the animal, but he alone cannot see this through his own swinish eyes. Whatever the truth, this either-or perception shows two people of different race as belonging to different species, one radically ignoble in relation to the other.

The racism anatomised—and perhaps even to some extent endorsed—by this late nineteenth-century novel is of central interest to the postcolonial critic because it epitomises, just as Kurtz's horror does, the dark extreme of colonial relationships. But not all intercultural communication between Western and Other protagonists in European literature is colonial in nature, and some works that, like *Typee*, include colonial elements are not essentially racist. The use of too procrustean a theoretical model can oversimplify the abundance and variety of intercultural relationships imagined in Western literature. The spirit of earlier ages is Other than our own and may represent intercultural communication in ways quite foreign to those of us who have lived through the racial hatreds of the twentieth century.

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