

# The Hero in Heart of Darkness

*by* Gary Hardaway

Remember *Heart of Darkness*?  
The British Company functionary  
who meets and briefs Marlow  
at the ported mouth of river  
on the coast of Africa  
just before he travels the river inland  
to fetch the fabled (“he dead”) Kurtz?  
Remember the equatorial heat, the flies,  
the lurking hum and scream of jungle,  
the squalor? Remember the functionary.  
Remember his coat and tie,  
remember his collar, starched and white  
despite humidity and river stench.  
That functionary, that clerk,  
that pathetically misplaced man,  
that dumb incongruous fuck,  
writing reports, counting tusks,  
doing all that minor functionaries do,  
with his tie and coat and stiff white collar—  
for me, he's the hero of the tale.  
He's the irreducible One  
surrounded every day  
by slithering, undulant Zero.

