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## JOSEPH CONRAD AND THE SILVER SCREEN

### Summary

The filmography of films based on the works of Joseph Conrad testifies that since the silent film era numerous filmmakers have turned to Conrad for source material. In most cases, the screen adaptations of his works were artistic and box-office failures. The release of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* in 1979 sparked a revival of creative and commercial interest in Conrad as a source for films. Coppola's picture, which has achieved the status of a modern classic, and Alfred Hitchcock's famous adaptation of *The Secret Agent* (1936), seem to belie the prevailing opinion that Conrad's works are impossible to adapt for the cinema *successfully*. This paper seeks to examine the ways in which Conrad's works have been adapted and appropriated by two major film directors in the twentieth century.

**Key words:** adaptation, appropriation, Joseph Conrad, Alfred Hitchcock, Francis F. Coppola, narratology.

Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), which is regarded as his literary manifesto, contains the often-quoted description of his task as a novelist: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word ... before all, to make you see". Two decades later, the American film director D.W. Griffith echoed Conrad by saying: "The task I'm trying to achieve is above all to make you see". Despite apparent similarities between the artistic declarations of Conrad and Griffith, their artistic goals were different. Whereas Griffith's aim was to make his audience see the world of physical action in terms of film images, Conrad aimed at making his readers "see" through the agency of the written word.

It is a critical commonplace that Conrad's works are difficult to adapt to the screen. Since the silent film era there have been numerous Conrad adaptations which were artistic and commercial failures. What is more, some of them were plagued by all kinds of production misfortunes or were never completed. To take only a few examples, the American director Orson Welles abandoned his first film project for Hollywood studios, which was an adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*. Instead, he chose to produce and direct his own masterpiece *Citizen Kane* (1941). The screenplay of Welles's abandoned film project is extant and in circulation, although it has never been published. As Richard J. Hand points out, the unfulfilled link between Orson Welles and Conrad found out a curious consummation in a project developed by the artist Fiona Banner in 2012, when the reading of the entire film script of

Welles's *Heart of Darkness* was relayed online and, simultaneously, on a cinema screen in the South Bank Centre in London (Hand 2015).

In the 1990s, the British film director David Lean, who undertook to bring *Nostromo* to the screen, died shortly before filming started. More recently, Harold Pinter published his screenplay of Conrad's *Victory* (2000). He had every reason to be proud of his adaptation, but the film has never been produced. It should be added that in the case of some distinguished film directors who brought Conrad to the screen, their adaptations often remain footnotes to the filmmakers' high-profile careers, for instance: Carol Reed's *Outcast of the Islands* (1952), Richard Brook's *Lord Jim* (1965), and Ridley Scott's *The Duellists* (1977). The same can be said about Andrzej Wajda's adaptation of *Shadow Line*, the Polish-British co-production released in 1976. To take one more example, the screen version of *Heart of Darkness* (1993), directed by the renowned British director Nicolas Roeg, proved to be "the cause of unaccustomed critical and commercial disaster" and, therefore, was released straight on to video (Speidel 2000, p. 131).

During Conrad's lifetime Hollywood studios bought the film rights to his fiction, produced the silent version of *Victory*, which is probably the most cinematically melodramatic of all his works. The Hollywood industry even paid the author to write screenplays himself. However, Conrad was reluctant to advertise that he was writing for cinema. In a letter to his friend he admits that "I am ashamed to tell you this ... but one must live" (Cartmell and Whelehan 2010, p. 45). In the 1920s and 1930s many adaptations of Conrad's works were produced on both sides of the Atlantic. Chronologically, the first Conrad film was Maurice Tourneur's silent version of *Victory* (1919). Gene M. Moore's comprehensive filmography of films and video programs based on the life and works of Joseph Conrad includes 86 entries: it details nearly all screen adaptations of his novels and stories made before 1997 (Moore 1997). Moore's bibliography begins with Tourneur's film *Victory* and ends with *Swept from the Sea*, the Canadian, British and U.S. co-produced movie, based on Conrad's short story "Amy Foster" (1903). *Swept from the Sea* (1997, dir. Beebon Kidron) is currently available on DVD and is advertised as "an epic, historical love story, charting the illicit romance of the servant Amy and shipwrecked Yanko in a scenic Cornwall". (The Polish title of Kidron's film is *Kochankowie sztormowego morza*).

Since the publication of Moore's bibliography in the 1990s, a large number of new adaptations and video programs have been made, such as the French film *Gabrielle* (2005, dir. Patrice Chereau) based on Conrad's domestic short story "The Return" (1914), and the Franco-Belgian co-production of *Almayer's Folly* (*La Folie Almayer* 2011). The acclaimed Belgian director Chantal Akerman has updated Conrad's first novel to the 1950s, ingeniously using a soundtrack featuring Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. It is worth mentioning that the recent international interest in adapting *Almayer's Folly* has not been restricted to European filmmakers. The Malaysian adaptation of *Almayer's Folly* (*Hanyut* 2012, dir. U-Wei Haji Saari) is a historical drama set in late nineteenth-century Malaya. The Malay

word “hanyut”, which has no direct English equivalent, can be translated as “drifting off into ominous peril without any real way of getting back”. The critics were quick to point out that the Malaysian adaptation of Conrad’s novel captures the tensions of Malaya’s dynamically cosmopolitan culture, while the film’s title is “particularly resonant in a Conradian context” (Hand 2015, p. 176).

Worth mentioning are also television adaptations of Conrad’s fiction, especially the BBC television series of *The Secret Agent* and an international television co-production of *Nostromo*. In the case of *The Secret Agent* (1992, dir. David Drury), the BBC adopted its “classic serial” approach with a design, cast, and *mise-en-scène* suitable for the relatively faithful adaptation of a classic literary work. The BBC three-part series had a luxury of duration compared to feature film adaptations. Moreover, the scriptwriters took full advantage of the “cliffhanger” technique enforced by television episodes to interpret Conrad’s convoluted plot.

Encouraged by the success of *The Secret Agent* series, the BBC ventured an international television co-production of *Nostromo*, which is Conrad’s longest novel. *Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo* (1996, dir. Alastair Reid) was a four-part series, filmed on location in Colombia, boasting a high-profile, international cast. However, the big budget co-production proved a costly failure and received mixed reviews. As Richard Hand observes, the lavish television production of *Nostromo* reveals issues with the process of adaptation of great literature as a whole: “the integrity of characterization on the page becomes fractured on television”, whereas Conrad’s exploration of enigma and irony becomes “confusing when dramatized” (Hand 2015, p. 175). Like many big-screen adaptations of Conrad’s fiction, the serialization of *Nostromo* displays television filmmakers’ tendency to adapt classic novels in familiar ways, employing generic norms and melodramatic conventions that inhibit imaginative interpretations of the literary sources.

It deserves mentioning that in France several television adaptations of Conrad’s fiction have been produced since the 1990s, for instance, *Pour Demain* (1992, dir. Fabrice Cazeneuve), based on Conrad’s story “To-morrow” (1902), and also *Au Bout du rouleau* (2002), which is an updated version of Conrad’s *The End of the Tether* (1902). The fact that those television adaptations were feature-length films reveals that Conrad’s fiction has wide appeal for French audiences.

Let me digress for a moment and explain that many of narrative and stylistic conventions of classic-novel adaptations have their roots in television’s early history, ideals, and technology. In Britain, adaptations on television have been greatly influenced by John Reith’s notion of public service broadcasting (PSB). Lord John Reith was the first Director General of the BBC and is associated with its public service ideals. The remit of the BBC, which was the sole broadcaster until 1955, was to “educate, inform, and entertain”. Adaptations were seen as a perfect way to achieve all these aims, bringing great literature to the small

screen. Sarah Cardwell argues that despite enormous changes in the landscape of television, the Reithian ideal still has currency today with television producers, critics, and audiences, especially when discussion turns to the role of the BBC. She supports the view that its aims and accomplishments are also measured with reference to the broader conceptions of television's public role: "If the public is to depend upon these representations of great literature for their educative and informative value, then the adaptations must provide a fair representation of the source novels" (Cardwell 2007, p. 188). This partly explains British television adaptations' preoccupation with fidelity, that is, the faithfulness to the words and "content" of the highly-regarded and much-loved novels.

On the other hand, this is a possible explanation for the ingrained prejudice among academic television theorists towards literature on the small screen. Television adaptations are often accused of being concerned with fidelity and with a narrow range of British literature, particularly British classic novels, reflecting the traditional notion of "educating and informing" the audience about British cultural heritage. Some television theorists maintain that classic-novel adaptations, often referred to as classic serials, look broadly the same and often prove to be dull, formulaic products, further subsumed into other categories with vaguely derogatory labels, such as "heritage television" or "costume drama" (Cardwell 2007, p. 192), whereas other critics claim that costume drama and classic novel television adaptations from the mid 1990s are all a part of the "heritage export" which makes British productions so popular across the world (Cooke 2003, p. 166). The heritage debate has divided critics and theorists working in the field of film/literature studies. It is characteristic that there is a growing body of important recent publications in the field which exclude consideration of television adaptations, while some leading scholars openly hold the view that "television adaptations are not a branch of film adaptations but are a distinct medium-specific form" and advocate recognizing "television's different historical purposes and principles" (Cardwell 2007, p. 194).

Leaving aside the medium-specificity debates of adaptation theory, the salient fact remains that Conrad's novels and stories have been transformed into all types of media, including operas (e.g. Greg Bartholomew's chamber opera *Razumov*, based on *Under Western Eyes*, and *The Secret Agent*, a two-act opera with libretto by J.D. McClatchy and score by Michael Dellaira), historical and documentary films as well as videogames. The most recent example is a game titled *Spec Ops: The Line* (2K Games 2012), in which three American soldiers are shown searching a devastated Dubai for the missing Captain: his name is John Konrad. The videogame includes a horrifying sequence in which the American soldiers' mission is seriously mismanaged and many innocent civilians are killed. The reviewers were quick to notice that the Conrad-influenced creators of the digital game "exploit and transgress generic conventions of the adventure story and challenge their audience with a similar Conradesque journey into self-interrogation" (Hand 2015, p. 185).

The further part of my paper is focused on two cinematic adaptations of Conrad's novels which are often referred to as "unfaithful" adaptations: Alfred Hitchcock's early film

*Sabotage* (1936), which is a reworking of *The Secret Agent*, and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which filmgoers do not ordinarily think of as an adaptation.

At this point, a bit of terminological ground-clearing needs to be done in order to explain the difference between adaptation and appropriation. Linda Hutcheon in her seminal book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) and Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) demonstrate how all-encompassing the adaptation process can be, pointing out that although the usual connotation of adaptation is cinematic adaptation, it is an equally important practice in the worlds of theatre, radio, graphic art and digital games. Exploring diverse ways in which film, television, theatre as well as literature, adapt, revise and reimagine other works of art, Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders make use of the two umbrella terms: 'adaptation' and 'appropriation'.

Hutcheon defines the phenomenon of adaptation from three interrelated perspectives. First, seen as a formal entity or product, an adaptation is an acknowledged transposition of a particular work or works. Second, as a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation. Third, seen from the perspective of its process of reception, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. "We experience adaptations as (...) palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon 2006, p. 8).

The second term, "appropriation", is taken from Cultural Studies. At a general level, appropriations differ from adaptations in that they are "not always as clearly signalled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process" (Sanders 2006, p. 27), but the chief difference between an adaptation and appropriation lies in the approach practised by cultural materialist criticism of Shakespeare and the Renaissance that emerged in the 1980s. According to Jonathan Dollimore, this approach views texts as "inseparable from the conditions of their production and reception in history" (Dollimore 1988, p. ix). The end-product is a historically situated commodity. If the screen text is viewed as commodity, then the focus is audience-oriented rather than text-based. Thus appropriation announces that the principal concern is with the text's afterlife and with the audience, whereas adaptation emphasizes the primacy of the literary text. (Cartmell and Whelehan 2010). The approach developed by cultural materialist critics will be adopted in the analysis of Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* in the further part of this paper.

Let us begin with the analysis of Hitchcock's *Sabotage* (1936), which was the first cinematic adaptation of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. It needs to be pointed out that *Sabotage* (the U.S. title: *A Woman Alone*) is frequently confused with Hitchcock's film *The Secret Agent* released in the same year. Hitchcock and the screenwriter Charles Bennett had used this title in their earlier film based on Somerset Maugham's spy stories *Ashenden, or the British Agent*, so they had to find another title. Hitchcock's *Sabotage*, which has often been

dismissed as an “unfaithful” adaptation, offers an interesting example of how the film director alters both the story and discourse of Conrad’s novel as well as the relationship between the two in order to create suspense in his movie.

Contemporary adaptation scholarship employs a wide range of critical approaches, such as: fidelity, medium specificity, and taxonomical readings, cultural and historical contexts, reception, genre criticism, intertextuality (Cartmell and Whelehan 2010; Weselinski 2012). Brian McFarlane in his seminal book *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996) refocused critical attention back towards narrative. McFarlane’s reading of adaptations through a narratological framework encouraged many adaptation scholars to examine and codify the narrative strategies of literary adaptations. For instance, Robert Stam systematically analyses certain formal aspects of film adaptations from the point of view of narratology (Stam 2005), whereas Suzanne Speidel adopts the narratological methodology developed by Gérard Genette in his book *Figures III* (1972), expanded by Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse in Fiction and Film* (1978), which is particularly useful for the examination of numerous possibilities of the presentation of narrative time in literature and film. Having established a connection between narratological theory and Hollywood policy, Speidel undertakes a textual dissection akin to that performed by both structural critics and Hollywood screenwriters (Speidel 2000, p. 136). The separation of ‘story’ (the “what happens” component) and ‘discourse’ (the “how it happens” component) is of central importance here because it enables one to examine how Conrad’s experimental, modernist discourse and, especially, his anti-chronological plots, are transferred from one medium to another.

*Sabotage*, updated to the 1930s, shows the Verloc family living above a small cinema in the East End. Mrs. Verloc’s brother, Stevie, has been transformed from an adult into a small boy, while the sinister “Professor” has been replaced by a doting grandfather and bird-shop owner, who concocts his explosives among the child’s dolls and the mother’s washing. In Hitchcock’s movie a new character is introduced in the shape of a young plain-clothes policeman, Ted (instead of Ossipon), who prevents Mrs. Verloc from confessing to a crime. The changes made to the ending of the story are most conspicuous: in the closing sequence, a second bomb explosion destroys all evidence of Mrs. Verloc’s crime, thus saving her from imprisonment or capital punishment. In conformity with cinema’s commercial requirements, a reassuring, happy ending has been provided. While Mr. Verlock’s body has been plausibly disposed of, a handsome detective is there to marry Winnie Verlock. Clearly, Hitchcock’s “unfaithful” adaptation spans two popular genres: the melodramatic love story and the spy thriller. This allows to place *Sabotage*, made towards the end of Hitchcock’s British career when he was working for Gaumont British studios in the 1930s, within a staple approach to narratives which continues to be practised in Hollywood today.

Let us briefly examine the issue of Conrad’s experimental, modernist discourse in the screen version of the novel. Hitchcock’s film retains the most important elements of the story

(plot, characters, setting), especially in the first half of the film leading up to and showing Stevie's death. During this part, the discourse of the film departs from the convoluted pattern of the novel, but instead restores the chronological order of events in order to engage the audience in a waiting game. Unlike in the novel, Stevie is blissfully unaware that he is carrying a bomb, but the viewer knows it and grows apprehensive about the boy's safety. The film director skillfully uses discourse time in order to manipulate the viewer's response and also to build up the suspense, playing against the time limit of the bomb ticking away toward explosion. In an interview given to the French New Wave director François Truffaut, Hitchcock explained the difference between audience surprise and narrative suspense in the following way:

Let us suppose that there is a bomb underneath this table (...). Nothing happens, and then all of a sudden (...) there is an explosion. The public is surprised but prior to this surprise, it has been an absolutely ordinary scene, of no special consequence. Now, let us take a suspense situation. The bomb is underneath the table and the public (...) is aware that the bomb is going to explode at one o'clock and there is a clock in the decor (...). The public is longing to warn the characters on the screen (...). "There's a bomb beneath you and it's about to explode!" (Truffaut 1978, p. 80)

During the sequence in which Stevie carries Verlock's time-bomb, the audience is exposed to a dramatic montage of scenes: the camera cuts abruptly from the bomb Stevie is carrying, to the various clocks he passes on the way to Piccadilly Circus. The audience knows the exact time the bomb will explode, that is, 1.45 p.m. The rapid cutting is employed to increase the spectator's anxiety about the bomb's imminent explosion: the sequence includes approximately forty shots depicting the boy's progress through London and with each new clock we can see on the screen, the minute hand is shown getting closer to 1.45, at which point the bomb will explode.

In the next segments leading up to and showing Verlock's death, the original story is significantly altered, whereas the discourse remains nearly unaltered. Of particular interest is the scene of Verlock's death in *Sabotage*, which may serve as a prime example of how the discourse's temporal ambiguity in Conrad's novel is communicated through the cinematic montage. The death-scene in *The Secret Agent*, which is narrated in the third person, contains a furtive insertion of a discourse ellipsis, that is, the omission of the act of stabbing:

Mr. Verloc was lying on his back and staring upwards. He saw partly on the ceiling a clenched hand holding a carving knife. It flicked up and down. Its movements were leisurely enough for Mr. Verlock to recognise the limb and the weapon (...) and to taste the flow of death rising in his gorge (...). They were leisurely enough for Mr. Verloc to elaborate a plan of defence (...) but they were not leisurely enough to allow Mr. Verloc the time to move either hand or foot. The knife was already planted in his breast (...) Mr. Verlock, the Secret Agent (...) expired without stirring a limb" (Conrad 1990, p. 234).

On close reading, one can easily notice that the recurrent phrase (“Its movements were leisurely enough”) in combination with the discourse ellipsis (“The knife was already planted in his breast”) are introduced to depict Mr. Verlock’s changing perception of reality at the last moments of his life, when he realises his danger. Towards the end of the scene, the discourse’s temporal ambiguity is revealed by means of a slightly altered phrase (“they were *not* leisurely enough...”), which provides an ironic commentary on the perceptions of the character who develops an “elaborate plan of defence”.

In the film version, the director added an entirely new scene in which Mrs. Verlock, after hearing the news of the bomb explosion, is shown passing through the cinema hall to her living room. At that moment, a children’s *matinée* is in progress and Walt Disney’s film *Cock Robin* is on the screen. She can hear the children’s laughter and the diminishing repetitions of the song: “Who killed Cock Robin? Who killed Cock Robin?”. This admirably directed scene is followed by the scene of stabbing in which Mrs. Verloc, while serving dinner to her husband, finds herself against her own will picking up the carving knife to serve the meal and - eventually - to kill her husband.

However, in *Sabotage* the actual stabbing occurs below the frame, out of sight of the audience: Mr. Verlock and his wife are shown on the screen in a two-medium shot, while their struggle for the knife takes place below the line of the frame, which allows the spectator to view Mrs. Verloc in a more favourable light. The ingenious juxtaposition of those scenes elicited differing interpretations of Hitchcock’s moral ambiguity. For instance, Truffaut takes the view that the scene “almost suggests suicide rather than murder” (Truffaut 1978, p. 120). In a similar fashion, Olsson in his recent book on Hitchcock describes the scene of stabbing as “implied suicide” (Olsson 2015, p. 125). The film director is quoted as saying that his intention was to make the murder “inevitable without any blame attached to the woman” (Gottlieb 1995, p. 186). Of course, it is possible to find many other interesting examples of how Hitchcock’s seemingly “unfaithful” adaptation conveys the meaning of the novel as well as its ironic tone and ambiguities. It is small wonder, therefore, that Graham Greene, who was one of the first film critics in Britain in the 1930s, was full of praise for *Sabotage* in his review written for *The Spectator* in 1936: “*Sabotage* is not, of course, Conrad’s *Secret Agent*. That dark drab passionate tale of Edwardian London could never find a place in the popular cinema (...). But Mr. Hitchcock’s ‘variations on a theme’ (...) is convincingly realistic (...) and retains some of the ruthlessness of the original” (Greene 1980, p. 123).

Let us now turn to Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which is generally considered as the greatest of all films inspired by Conrad. Paradoxically, Coppola’s film does not acknowledge its literary source and keeps Conrad and his novella uncredited. (It is worth mentioning in passing that in 2001 Coppola revised the film and reinserted the footage he had previously discarded, with the result that his film retitled *Apocalypse Now Redux* has grown from 153 minutes to 202 minutes). The screenwriters, John Milius and Francis Coppola, have updated Conrad and shifted his locale: the film’s setting is the Southeast Asian jungle in the 1960s.

They have also introduced many characters and events which have no precedent in Conrad's tale. One of the main differences lies in the change of the narrator because the filmmakers have substituted Captain Benjamin Willard for Conrad's storyteller Marlow. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow was employed by a trading company as captain of a Congo steamboat. While journeying up the river Congo to the very outposts of civilization, Marlow encounters the mysterious ivory trader Mr. Kurtz who has fallen on evil ways. In *Apocalypse Now*, Benjamin Willard is an army officer whose mission is to eliminate Colonel Walter E. Kurtz "with extreme prejudice". Walter Kurtz is a regular army officer driven mad who has retreated to the hills and is fighting his own war. Unlike Marlow, Willard is a man estranged from civilization, an army officer who had previously served time in war-torn Indo-China and, while being there, had assimilated much of the madness and horrors of the war.

The change of the narrator in Coppola's film is a significant departure from Conrad's story because it involves the change of the novella's point of view. In the film's opening sequence Coppola abandons the convention of realism. Initially, Captain Willard's face is shown on the screen in a big upside-down close-up, which is followed by an impressionistic sequence of images of military helicopters and other equipment wreathed in smoke and jungle fires, and - finally - a Buddha head. The overall effect of those images is overwhelming: at a surface level, the accumulation of visual images mounted in superimpositions and lap dissolves reflects the instability of Willard's vision. At a deeper level, those images serve as early warning signals that he is emotionally and mentally unstable, and also suggest that no one can live through the madness and horror of Vietnam without losing sanity. As Joy Boyum observes, the substitution of Captain Willard, who is a madman and assassin, for a sane Marlow, who has just returned to peaceful London to tell his tale of Kurtz, is a meaningful inversion of Conrad, suggesting that "in contrast to Conrad's world, a sanity such as Marlow's is not possible in our own" (Boyum 1989, p. 132). However, she criticizes the filmmakers for the apparent failure "to read Conrad wisely and well", which is reflected in their failure to grasp the function of the novella's distinctive point of view both as a thematic and a structural device. Boyum maintains that the reader of *Heart of Darkness* can easily identify with the sensible and sane Marlow who is our guide into "the heart of darkness", whereas the film audience remains alienated from the unbalanced Willard and, by extension, from the film's apocalyptic vision as a whole, which she calls "a misguided journey to the heart of darkness" (1989, p. 136).

The film abounds in intertextual references to modernist literature and culture. To take only a few examples, Colonel Kurtz (played by Marlon Brando), is shown reading James Frazer's famous book of anthropology *The Golden Bough* and Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, which were the main sources of inspiration for T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Kurtz is also shown reciting T. S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" whose epigraph is derived from *Heart of Darkness*: "Mistah Kurtz - he dead". The scene of Kurtz's death resembles a ritual murder: what the audience can see on the screen is a series of the shots

of natives killing a carabao (i.e., a water buffalo) intercut with the shots of Willard hacking up Kurtz, thus underlining the symbolic nature of the act. The treatment of Kurtz has elicited disparaging comments from Joy Boyum who writes that the movie's Kurtz, though closer in conception to Conrad than any of the other figures in the film, seems to be "Conrad interpreted by a college freshman who has just taken a course in T.S. Eliot and discovered Jungian archetypes in the process". And she goes on to say that Kurtz is "a totally mythic figure and one who knows he is a myth" (1989, p. 135).

However, from the perspective of Cultural Materialist criticism, a vast network of intertextual references created in *Apocalypse Now* can be viewed as the filmmakers' attempt to insert the modernist source text into what Robert Stam has termed "intertextual dialogism". According to Stam, intertextual dialogism refers to "the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative discourses within which the artistic text is situated" (Stam 2012, p. 81). Following Genette and cultural materialist critics, Stam argues against the notion that a literary work contains a single extractable "essence" hidden within and suggests that the study of adaptation needs to be linked with the study of intertextual reference, transformation, and recycling.

As noted earlier, cultural materialist critics view texts as recycled property which is "inseparable from the conditions of their production and reception in history". Their chief concern is with the text's afterlife and with the audience for which the text has been constructed. The term "appropriation" favoured by Cultural Materialist criticism enables us to circumvent the issue of fidelity which for decades has dogged adaptation studies. The term is especially useful when there are several versions of a single narrative: the existence of various screen versions of a literary work invites critics to look at how a source text has been appropriated/recycled for a particular film audience.

While watching *Apocalypse Now* it becomes increasingly apparent that this is one of the early attempts by mainstream cinema to adapt modernist fiction for the new generation of filmgoers saturated from childhood through college with film and television. In the 1970s, Coppola was among those few filmmakers who quickly noticed the emergence of an audience capable of appreciating the complexities of film and its various relationships with literature, including "high" modernist texts.

To sum up the foregoing, Hitchcock's *Sabotage* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* are illustrative examples of how literary works evolve and mutate to fit new times, new media, and new audiences. From the perspective of film history, *Sabotage* is an adaptation of a modernist novel made by the modernist film director who has altered the convoluted pattern of Conrad's novel and has developed an innovative narrative technique in order to cater for a film audience. Unlike *Sabotage*, *Apocalypse Now* keeps Conrad's modernist novella uncredited. Coppola's film may serve as a prime example of an imaginative yet problematic appropriation of *Heart of Darkness* which has immediately attracted much critical attention

across the world and has brought it into intertextual dialogue with its source-text as well as with other cinematic adaptations of Conrad's novella. Coppola's film also helps to illuminate the ways in which the film director performs a cultural revitalization of a canonical modernist text in the postmodern age of cultural recycling, reworking, remaking, and revision.

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## Joseph Conrad i srebrny ekran

### Streszczenie

Filmografia adaptacji dzieł Josepha Conrada świadczy o tym, że od czasów filmu niemego liczni filmowcy sięgali po utwory Conrada jako materiał na scenariusze filmowe. W większości przypadków okazało się, że ekranizacje utworów Conrada to porażki artystyczne i fiasko finansowe. Film Francisa F. Coppola *Czas Apokalipsy* (1979) zapoczątkował odrodzenie artystycznego i finansowego zainteresowania środowiska filmowców twórczością Conrada. Obraz Coppola, który osiągnął status współczesnej klasyki filmowej, oraz słynna adaptacja powieści *Tajny agent* w reżyserii Alfreda Hitchcocka (1936), wydają się zaprzeczać powszechnej opinii, że ekranizacje dzieł Conrada z góry skazane są na niepowodzenie. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie metod i środków artystycznego wyrazu jakimi posługiwali się dwaj czołowi reżyserzy XX wieku w swoich adaptacjach utworów Conrada.

**Słowa kluczowe:** adaptacja, przyswajanie, Joseph Conrad, Alfred Hitchcock, Francis F. Coppola, narratologia.

Artykuł nadesłany do redakcji we wrześniu 2016 roku.

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