"OVER THE EDGE":
LIMINAL ASPECTS OF CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Marek Pacukiewicz

The University of Silesia, Katowice

Abstract: *Heart of Darkness* is often seen as a parable on the subject of human nature or as a critique of modern Western civilization and its colonial crimes. The novella was obviously planned not as a story 'about' Africa, but above all as a story that makes the reader – like Marlow – confront the experience of an unknown cultural context. As such, it is an exemplary tale about the meeting of cultures and the experience of cultural otherness, which cannot be reduced to a mere epistemological pattern. This article is an attempt to apply the concept of the ritual of passing and Victor Turner's theory of liminality to a reading of Conrad's novella.

Keywords: *Heart of Darkness*, liminality, intercultural contact, anthropology of experience.

Heart of Darkness is often seen as a parable on the subject of modern Western civilization. As Czesław Miłosz remarks in his *Treatise on Poetry*:

Cywilizator, oszalały Kurtz,
Miał kość słoniową ze śladami krwi,
Na memoriale o światłach kultury
Pisał „ohyda", a więc już wstępował
W dwudziesty wiek.[1]

One of the civilizers, a madman named Kurtz,
A gatherer of ivory stained with blood,
Scribbled in the margin of his report
On the Light of Culture: "The horror." And climbed
Into the twentieth century.[2]

– the twentieth century being the century of "hollow men".[3] On the surface, it would appear that such might well have been the intention of the author, who was

---

[1] C. Miłosz. *Traktat poetycki z moim komentarzem*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001, p. 23.

[2] C. Milosz. *A treatise on Poetry*. Transl. C. Milosz and R. Hass. New York: The Ecco Press, 2001, p. 9.

[3] In her study entitled *Miłosz wobec Conrada 1948-1959* Jolanta Dudek writes that " […] in Miłosz's *Treatise on Morality* Conrad's African tale is alluded to as a warning and also as a source text for the

careful not to include any traces of his own experiences in the text of the novella – so much so, that the continent of Africa is named only once (and in a very general context, together with South America and Australia). However, I do not think that today 'hearts of darkness' can simply be reduced to general reflections on the subject of 'human nature'.[4] The problem of the scope and contextuality of interpretations of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has been admirably delineated by Adam Hochschild, the author of a historical study on the subject of genocide in the Congo Free State:

> High school teachers and college professors who have discussed this book in thousands of classrooms over the years tend to do so in terms of Freud, Jung and Nietzsche; of classical myth, Victorian innocence and original sin; of postmodernism, postcolonialism and poststructuralism. [...] We read it as a parable for all times and places, not as a book about one time and place.[5]

Scholars reconstructing the cultural contexts of *Heart of Darkness* – studies that come to mind are Ian Watt's classic *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* and Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate All the Brutes* – mainly highlight the critical potential of the novella, which deconstructs, as it were, the European colonial system along with the scientific discourse which was often used to justify cultural violence. Although these scholars make use of highly contextual source material, as a rule – and even typically – they tend to treat the colonial system as a certain totality that functions at any time and in any place. On the basis of his analyses, Lindqvist even goes as far as to say that nineteenth-century colonialism was a kind of testing ground for discourses and methods which eventually culminated in the Holocaust. Claims such as these are by no means beyond the pale of postcolonial research, which is why Ania Loomba's critical view of postcolonial studies also delineates certain problems connected with the interpretation of *Heart of Darkness*:

> Postcoloniality becomes a vague condition of people anywhere and everywhere, and the specifities of locale do not matter. In part the dependence of postcolonial theory upon literary and cultural criticism, and upon post-structuralism, is responsible for this shift.[6]

---

period" (p. 31). She goes on to observe that the title of the novella – quoted in the final line of Miłosz's *Treatise on Morality* – serves as "a symbolic testimony to the times in which Poland – lying at the heart of Europe – was undergoing a historic upheaval of cataclysmic proportions and – ironically – found itself in a situation that paralleled that of the Belgian Congo during the times of Conrad and Casement" (p. 59): J. Dudek. *Miłosz wobec Conrada 1948-1959*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014.

   [4] Cf. M. Heydel. "Do kresu doświadczenia. O czytaniu 'Jądra ciemności'" [In:] J. Conrad, *Jądro ciemności*. Transl. M. Heydel. Kraków: Znak, 2001, p. 127: "Conrad [...] presents us with an image of the fundamental alienation and ambiguity which are at the heart of the human condition."

   [5] A. Hochschild. *King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston, New York: Mariner Books, 1999, p. 147. Hochschild sees Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a book that is permeated by cultural stereotypes, even though it constitutes a brilliant critique of colonialism: "However laden it is with Victorian racism, *Heart of Darkness* remains the greatest portrait in fiction of Europeans in the Scramble for Africa." *Ibid.*, p. 111. In Poland Jerzy Franczak has made an appeal for more "historical and cultural reality": J. Franczak. "Conrad i (post)kolonializm". *Twórczość* 2008, № 8, p. 116.

   [6] A. Loomba. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*, London, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 17. See also L. Gandhi. *Postcolonial theory: a critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998,

By using the tools of cultural anthropology to examine Conrad's text, we may try out a new cognitive approach and thus hope to find an alternative to such readings. Even if our field of interest is limited to the problems of colonialism, we should realize that the latter cannot be reduced to questions of discourse or a set of political issues, as it is a specific cultural practice.

For Conrad, what Loomba calls "specifities of locale" really did matter. *Heart of Darkness*, as we know, is not a book about the Congo Free State.[7] Surprisingly, though, Conrad took great pains to give a detailed account of the way in which the system functioned and – above all – the influence it had on traditional local cultures. We must bear in mind that the colonial systems of nineteenth-century Africa were highly contextualized and differed from each other, depending on the type of government imposed by particular empires and also on the diversity of local cultures.[8] The system used by Leopold II in the Congo was designed to ruthlessly exploit the region's natural resources while at the same time maintaining a semblance of freedom by abolishing slavery and introducing equality of rights. In reality, however – and in the name of progress – it brutally cut off the local inhabitants from their own cultural tradition, destroying their sense of identity and offering them practically nothing in return.[9] *Heart of Darkness* not only reconstructs the way in which the system functioned – by giving us descriptions of the "dust-bin of progress", the construction of the railway line that nobody needs and the "grove of death", where legally overexploited natives die of physical exhaustion – but also reproduces snatches of the colonisers' peculiar discourse, which is littered with degenerated terminology and glitters with the beads of "progress" and "civilization". There is an even deeper perspective, however: Conrad's portrayal of the steamer's crew is a perfect image of natives who have partially 'evolved' and whose understanding of the work involved in operating the steam engine is presented as a grotesque mixture of technology and

---

p. 167: "[…] postcolonialism is caught between the politics of structure and totality on the one hand, and the politics of fragment on the other". For postcolonial readings of *Heart of Darkness* see: D. Vogel. "Joseph Conrad in the light of postcolonialism" [In:] *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2012, vol. VII.

[7] See P. Halen's contribution to the discussion in: "Joseph Conrad i 'ciemności' Afryki Środkowej. Zbeletryzowane świadectwo o Kongu czy bajka końca wieku?". Transl. J. Pawelczyk. *Polska Sztuka Ludowa. Konteksty* 2007, № 3-4, p. 118.

[8] Cf. A. Zajączkowski. *Muntu dzisiaj. Studium afrykanistyczne*. Warszawa: PIW, 1970; Cf. J. Kieniewicz. *Od ekspansji do dominacji. Próba teorii kolonializmu*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1986.

[9] Andrzej Zajączkowski gives a good assessment of the situation: the Belgian colonial system "destroyed the tribalisms which were the carriers of this culture and successfully imposed ways of life which were basically European, but which were bereft of any references to higher European ideological values. The inhabitants of the Congo were to believe the white man's assurance that by working hard they would have better things to eat and would change their shirts more often. Eventually, when they could afford their own water closets, they would fully conform to the image and likeness of the white man" – A. Zajączkowski. *Niepodległość Konga a kolonializm belgijski. Zarys historyczno-socjologiczny*. Warszawa: PWN, 1968, p. 295. Cf. J. Kieniewicz, *ed. cit.*, p. 292: "The point about colonialism is that – in a given set of circumstances – it was a necessary prescription for controlling development in backward societies, creating a situation in which there was a constant incompatibility between structure and identity. […] Colonialism replaced controlling mechanisms that had been blocked, which eventually led to changes in identity and behaviour that set these societies apart from others."

magic. The question therefore arises: should we see this as evidence of Conrad's sensitivity to the problems of a different culture, or should we rather see it as being nothing but a pretext for criticizing his own culture and the discourse that went with it? The reader of *Heart of Darkness* may at times have the impression that the 'savage' – as in the philosophical discourse of the Enlightenment – is merely an extra whose function is to provoke hot debate.[10]

Chinua Achebe's important contribution to the discussion invites further debate.[11] He argues that – notwithstanding his fame as a writer and critic of colonialism – Joseph Conrad remains a racist. For Conrad, Africa is not "a continent of people", but something reminiscent of the portrait of Dorian Gray – a backcloth onto which all Europe's suppressed dark impulses and subconscious fears are projected: "Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray". Achebe's clinching argument is the fact that those natives who are representatives of traditional cultures are depicted as a shrieking rabble swarming on the riverbank. Conrad denied them the faculty of speech, thus turning Africa into a blank space filled with darkness and reflecting the primaeval urges that have been suppressed by European civilization.[12] Likewise, Edward Said accuses Conrad of "both criticizing and reproducing the imperial ideology of his time".[13] It is only when he deconstructs this imperial discourse (in Marlow's tale) that we catch a very vague glimpse of the 'real' Africa: Conrad "[…] permits his later readers to imagine something other than an Africa carved up into dozens of European colonies, even if, for his own part, he had little notion of what that Africa might be."[14]

To ask about Conrad's racism is also – apart from anything else – to ask about his cultural sensitivity and his awareness of cultural identity. As scholars have pointed out, Achebe in his interpretation fails to take into consideration the frame narrative structure of *Heart of Darkness* and the symbolic nuances between light and darkness that are scattered throughout the book. The deficiency of these interpretations may lie in the fact that they equate a knowledge of culture with a knowledge of language, which is an oversimplification. Fabio De Leonardis rightly draws attention to the complexity of Marlow's discourse: "[…] it can be demonstrated that the representation of the Other in the tale is not strictly monological, but is the result of a mix of different discourses that clash with each other and are unable to create a unitary, coherent picture."[15] However, we must bear in mind that Marlow's journey also takes

---

[10] Cf. A. Waligórski. *Antropologiczna koncepcja człowieka*. Warszawa: PWN, 1973, p. 95.

[11] Zob. Ch. Achebe. "Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" [In:] J. Conrad. *Heart of Darkness. An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. Ed. by R. Kimbrough. New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988, pp. 251-262.

[12] It is worth noting that something similar once happened during a controversy between two anthropologists: Gananath Obeyesekere accused Marshall Sahlins of being a racist on the grounds that his interpretation of Captain James Cook's death at the hands of natives was a reflection of the racial myth of the "white god".

[13] E. Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage 1993, p. xx.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 30.

[15] F. De Leonardis. "The Representation of the Other in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [In:] *Hearts of Darkness. Melville, Conrad and Narratives of Oppression*. Ed. by P. Jędrzejko, M.M. Reigelman, Z. Sza-

place *outside* his discourse: the alienation he experiences is beyond his powers of comprehension.

As scholars have often noted, Marlow mentions his "remote kinship" with the shrieking natives (albeit in an ambiguous manner), thus using the evolutionary discourse of colonialism to highlight the existence of a common human nature – a universal bond that is often invoked in this context. As Przemysław Czapliński observes, "[when he is] in close contact with the natives, [Marlow] modifies European notions about the Savage and breaks down the barrier of colonial speech, creating a mini anthropology of 'brotherhood notwithstanding revulsion' for his own personal use."[16] Let us hasten to add that owing to its universal character, such an anthropolgy is philosophical rather than cultural. That said, we must ask whether there is any place for a specific non-European culture in Conrad's writing?

At this juncture we cannot but quote the highly significant declaration which Conrad made in the "Author's Note" to his first novel *Almayer's Folly*, replying to Alice Meynell's complaint that the stories he wrote were "decivilized":

> I am informed that in criticizing that literature which preys on strange people and prowls in far-off countries, under the shade of palms, in the unsheltered glare of sunbeaten beaches, amongst honest cannibals and the more sophisticated pioneers of our glorious virtues, a lady – distinguished in the world of letters – summed up her disapproval of it by saying that the tales it produced were "decivilized." And in that sentence not only the tales but, I apprehend, the strange people and the far-off countries also, are finally condemned in a verdict of contemptuous dislike. […]

> The critic and the judge seems to think that in those distant lands all joy is a yell and a war dance, all pathos is a howl and a ghastly grin of filed teeth, and that the solution of all problems is found in the barrel of a revolver or on the point of an assegai. And yet it is not so. […]

> And there is a bond between us and that humanity so far away. I am speaking here of men and women – not of the charming and graceful phantoms that move about in our mud and smoke and are softly luminous with the radiance of all our virtues […].

> I am content to sympathize with common mortals, no matter where they live; in houses or in tents, in the streets under a fog, or in the forests behind the dark line of dismal mangroves that fringe the vast solitude of the sea […].[17]

It is here, I think, that Conrad's work finds itself at the very heart of the anthropological dilemma which Western scholars grappled with at the turn of the nineteenth century and which was eventually defined by the anthropology of culture – the choice

---

tanik. Zabrze: M Studio, 2010, p. 106. Here it will not be inopportune to quote the author's conclusions, which partly overlap with Said's diagnosis: "The discourse of Otherness (meant as a subjective Genitive) is recognized as existing, but is not represented. The tale ends with a situation in which the narrating subject is almost completely cut into pieces, and his narration is composed of innumerable different fragments, irreducible to any single unity. As the frame narrator said in the very beginning, Marlow's experiences are inconclusive, and his African journey makes no exception." (p. 119).

[16] P. Czapliński. "Niebezpieczne arcydzieło" [In:] J. Conrad, *Jądro ciemności*. Transl. J. Polak. Poznań: Vesper, 2009, p. 147.

[17] J. Conrad. *Almayer's Folly*. New York: Doubleday, 1921, pp. ix-x.

between an attributive concept of culture (which assumes that the world of culture should be treated globally as a characteristic feature of mankind) and a distributive concept of culture (which not only assumes the existence of a world of individual cultures, but also assumes that these cultures – for all their variety – are equal). In the quotation above we can detect a certain hesitation. The point of departure is the bond of human nature. For Conrad, however, the end point is a collection of different individual men and women whose lives are similar, despite the fact that they take on different forms.

In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow is presented to us as an excellent observer. John W. Griffith even goes as far as to say that Marlow must cope with a problem that is well known to field anthropologists, namely that of explaining one's experience of an alien culture. However, in Marlow's case there is no transition from experience to understanding and his awareness of cultural relativism is steeped in the discourse of the times.[18] Any attempt to define Marlow's attitude must therefore view his tale in terms of experience and not in terms of ethnographic knowledge or understanding. Marlow is not trying to express "[…] the gradually acquired inner awareness of the Other",[19] but – as an eye witness – is relating his experience of meeting people of an alien culture.

In Marlow's case, I think we can therefore speak of a certain liminal experience (in the meaning given to the term by the anthropologist Victor Turner). Marlow's journey is often referred to as a visit to hell. However, such a description presupposes a total departure from the realm of culture, whereas a borderline or threshold experience is – in Turner's view – a specific "social limbo" in which the individual finds himself "betwixt and between".[20] And that is exactly how Marlow describes his experience. Unlike Kurtz, who "stepped over the edge", Marlow merely "peeped over the edge".[21]

Although Turner uses Arnold van Gennep's concept of *rites de passage* to mainly analyse ritual, he reminds us that "His focus was restricted to ritual, but his paradigm covers many extraritual processes."[22] More broadly, Turner understands liminality as a conscious experiment in the context of culture: "[…] liminal and liminoid situations as the settings in which new models, symbols, paradigms, etc., arise – as the seedbeds of cultural creativity."[23] Interestingly, Marlow often compares his journey to a pil-

---

[18] Cf. J.W. Griffith. *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma: 'Bewildered Traveller'*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

[19] M. Heydel. *"Do kresu…"*, *ed. cit.*, p. 113.

[20] V. Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, p. 24.

[21] J. Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*, *ed. cit.*, p. 69.

[22] V. Turner. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 13. Let us not forget that the narrative axis of *Heart of Darkness* is a journey, which is a structural model of liminality. Van Genepp himself draws attention to the fact that a journey often constitutes the structural basis of a ritual. Cf. A. van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 35-37.

[23] V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, *ed. cit.*, p. 28. Turner calls liminality the "subjunctive mood" of culture. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

grimage: "It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares" (p. 17), though he somewhat caustically stresses the absence of any element of the sacred: "a lot of faithless pilgrims" (p. 26). *Heart of Darkness* therefore records a turning point in Western European tradition, when formal symbolic structures began to be supplanted by "experience".[24] This liminal situation constitutes a serious crisis connected with social change,[25] not only in Africa, but – indirectly – in Europe: "Social dramas represent the phased process of their contestation."[26]

According to Turner and other anthropologists investigating experience, a borderline experience is a moment at which the clear relations and oppositions on which the present view of the world is based are blurred. It is a kind of "anti-structure" in which "[…] a man's untrammelled feet may take him […] by the way of solitude – utter solitude without a policeman – by the way of silence – utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion. These little things make all the great difference" (pp. 49-50). In such a situation one is forced to recombine the cultural elements that one knows, not only redefining cultural patterns, but also applying them to a non-standard situation. It is a kind of "symphony or synaesthestic ensemble of expressive cultural genres, or a synergy of varied symbolic operations"[27] – an act closely related to thinking (here Turner alludes to the concept of "flow" as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly). In the structure of Conrad's novella this amalgam is clearly marked by the use of specific formal means such as the much discussed delayed decoding, for instance in the scene in which Marlow first notices flying "sticks" and only later realizes that they were arrows. One can similarly explain the fact that the natives and the jungle are frequently equated with each other. Far from being a manifestation of Victorian racism, this is nature being given precedence over culture – something that is typical of a liminal situation: "Since liminality represents […] 'a levelling and stripping' of structural status, an important component of the liminal situation is […] an enhanced stress on nature at the expense of culture."[28] This experience leads to "periodical reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to Society, nature, and culture", which are spurs to thought and action.[29] We also see that at one point Marlow's only hope is to "think" by means of

---

[24] This was partly reflected in the religious crisis of Victorian literature. Cf. J. Pacukiewicz. *Poezja wiktoriańska a wielki kryzys religijny*. Kraków: Universitas, 2013.

[25] V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, *ed. cit.*, p. 17.

[26] Cf. C. GoGwilt. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double Mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

[27] See: V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, *ed. cit.*, p. 82.

[28] *Idem*, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, *ed. cit.*, p. 252. The author adds (on p. 253): "[…] symbolically, their structural life is snuffed out by animality and nature, even as it is being regenerated by these very same forces."

[29] *Idem*. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969, pp. 128-129. Such an amalgam – conveyed by Conrad's formal devices – is to be found in Marlow's tale.

The impressionism of *Heart of Darkness* is undeniable. In the words of Ian Watt: "For Conrad, the world of senses is not a picture but a presence, a presence so intense, unconditional and unanswerable that it loses the fugitive, hypothetical, subjective and primarily aesthetic qualities which it usually has in the

work, while the evolutionary "colonial discourse falls apart in his mouth".[30] Most interesting of all is the fact that a liminal experience creates a community made up of people facing something new and inevitable. Such a community – albeit of a peculiar nature – is the crew of the steamer, i.e. captain Marlow and the cannibals.

In the light of Conrad's novella, however, some of Turner's findings concerning liminality must be reconsidered. In highlighting the processualization of cultural phenomena, Turner assumes that experience and structure are mutually exclusive, which is disputable in itself. Marlow's experience makes us realize that certain structures of cultural patterns – discursive and social structures – never disappear completely. Evolutionary rhetoric comes back again and again in Marlow's tale. He seeks refuge in work, which – not being governed by the Victorian work ethic – helps him to put some order and structure into reality. Nor does the sense of community on his "tin-pot steamboat" alter the colonial hierarchy. It is these very elements – which cannot be blended together into a "mixture" – that constitute the boundaries dictating the trepidation of the encounter. In short, Conrad here expresses his lack of faith in an ideal world where there are no boundaries, for boundaries are where the meeting takes place – and so cannot be dispensed with.[31]

Conrad – for the first time in the history of Western literature – demonstrates that a meeting of cultures is a liminal experience which falls outside the scope of discourse. Marlow has the courage to say that he does not understand what is going on around him. He does not evade the confrontation, but is not always able to overcome his own prejudices. Conrad is the first writer to show the complex nature of contacts between different cultures. Here the Other is not entirely "savage" and impossible to understand, nor can he be adequately grasped by the established concepts and procedures of Western knowledge. The problem of contact and cultural change was a difficult one even for modern anthropology, which had accepted the idea of cultural relativism. The first attempt was made by Bronisław Malinowski, who put forward the important (albeit oversimplified and frequently criticized) proposition that the analysis of cultural change in Africa should take into account the complex factors that determined the course of this change and its effects.[32] All these elements are acknowledged in *Heart of Darkness*, although the core is the actual meeting itself.

---

impressionist tradition." – I. Watt. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1980, p. 179.

Likewise, the symbolism of the novella does not proceed from the invoking of established archetypes, but is rather to be found in the structure of the signs that appear in the course of the tale-cum-journey. Hence the intensity and interchangeability of the mist and the darkness, which invite a change of viewpoint: at the end of the book an immense darkness comes over the river Thames.

[30] P. Czapliński. "Niebezpieczne arcydzieło" [In:] J. Conrad, *Jądro ciemności, ed. cit.*, p. 142.

[31] Cf. L. Witkowski. "Bogactwo Kresów – między pograniczem kultury a kulturą pogranicza" [In:] *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*. Ed. E. Czaplejewicz and E. Kasperski. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1996.

[32] Among others, these are: the influences, interests and intentions of Whites, the processes of cultural contact and change, surviving forms of tradition, the reconstructed past of local tribes and the new forces of spontaneous African reintegration or reaction. Cf. B. Malinowski. *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945.

Citing Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the founder of the human sciences, Claude Lévi--Strauss notes that it was he who first realized that in order to get to know other people, one had to have the courage to examine oneself and also to show sympathy to others.[33] Conrad, as we know, loathed Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but on this one point there is a convergence of views between the two men that has a bearing on the anticipated future development of the human sciences. The difference is that Rousseau's approach developed into a critical philosophical system which – in Conrad's opinion – paved the way for the development of dangerous ideologies. In this sense, Conrad's prose foreshadows modern anthropology.

Being a 'borderland' writer – not only on account of his origins – Conrad could be called a 'liminoid' novelist.[34] If we wish to treat *Heart of Darkness* as a cautionary tale, then we would do well to see it as a caution against replacing the experience of the Other with the rhetoric of Otherness.

Translated by R. E. Pypłacz

WORKS CITED

Achebe, Chinua. "Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'" [In:] J. Conrad. *Heart of Darkness. An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. Ed. by R. Kimbrough. New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Conrad, Joseph. *Almayer's Folly*. New York: Doubleday, 1921.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness. An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. Ed. by R. Kimbrough. New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Czapliński, Przemysław. "Niebezpieczne arcydzieło" [In:] J. Conrad, *Jądro ciemności*. Transl. J. Polak. Poznań: Vesper, 2009.

De Leonardis, Fabio. "The Representation of the Other in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [In:] *Hearts of Darkness. Melville, Conrad and Narratives of Oppression*. Ed. by P. Jędrzejko, M.M. Reigelman, Z. Szatanik. Zabrze: M Studio, 2010.

Dudek, Jolanta. *Miłosz wobec Conrada 1948-1959*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014.

Franczak, Jerzy. "Conrad i (post)kolonializm". *Twórczość* 2008, № 8.

Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial theory: a critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge, 2004.

GoGwilt, Cristopher. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double Mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Griffith, John W. *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma: 'Bewildered Traveller'*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

Heydel, Magda. "Do kresu doświadczenia. O czytaniu *Jądra ciemności*" [In:] J. Conrad. *Jądro ciemności*. Transl. M. Heydel. Kraków: Znak, 2001.

---

[33] Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man" [In:] *Idem*, *Structural Anthropology. Volume 2*. Transl. M. Layton. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

[34] V. Turner. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, *ed. cit.*, p. 17.

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston–New York: Mariner Books, 1999.

"Joseph Conrad i 'ciemności' Afryki Środkowej. Zbeletryzowane świadectwo o Kongu czy bajka końca wieku?". Transl. J. Pawelczyk. *Polska Sztuka Ludowa. Konteksty* 2007, № 3-4.

Kieniewicz, Jan. *Od ekspansji do dominacji. Próba teorii kolonializmu*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1986.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man" [In:] *Idem*. *Structural Anthropology. Volume 2*. Transl. M. Layton. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*. London–New York: Routledge, 2005.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945.

Miłosz, Czesław. "Traktat poetycki" [In:] *Idem*. *Poezje*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1983.

Pacukiewicz, Justyna. *Poezja wiktoriańska a wielki kryzys religijny*. Kraków: Universitas, 2013.

Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.

Vogel, Daniel. "Joseph Conrad in the light of postcolonialism" [In:] *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2012, vol. VII.

Waligórski, Andrzej. *Antropologiczna koncepcja człowieka*. Warszawa: PWN, 1973.

Watt, Ian. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1980.

Witkowski, Lech. „Bogactwo Kresów – między pograniczem kultury a kulturą pogranicza" [In:] *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*. Ed. E. Czaplejewicz, E. Kasperski. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1996.

Zajączkowski, Andrzej. *Muntu dzisiaj. Studium afrykanistyczne*. Warszawa: PIW, 1970.

Zajączkowski, Andrzej. *Niepodległość Konga a kolonializm belgijski. Zarys historyczno-socjologiczny*. Warszawa: PWN.