

***Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim* by J. Conrad: the Author's Concept of Race and Femininity in the Context of Race and Gender Relationship**

Race and gender issues in contemporary post-colonial studies are often analyzed separately. Yet there exists another approach to the problem: race and gender relationship may be studied in its integrity – especially in case these two issues interact in the author's text as it happens in Shakespeare's tragedies (see, for instance, works on race, gender and religion in *Othello*).

I argue: Conrad's concept of race and femininity belongs to the tradition of the English national anticolonialist discourse of 16th-19th centuries rereading and developing it in the two of his outstanding texts of 1890s – *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* comprising a single entity. The article gives a brief outline of the history of the discourse beginning with travel accounts of the 15th century and great tragedies of Ch. Marlowe. It leads to conclusion that Conrad's concept of race and gender interacts in many ways with that of Ch. Marlowe, whose tragedies were much admired by late-Victorian romanticists [Neider]. Shakespeare's play of the Moor of Venice questions his contemporaries' belief in non-white races' inferiority amply presented by travel accounts of the 15th-16th centuries, actualizing the issue in its close interaction with another contemporary theme – that of female inferiority. Shakespearean tradition of analyzing race and gender issues in their relationship and interdependence at the end of 17th cent. was continued by Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*. A. Behn was the first to point out that white females of the ruling class in New Time were contradictorily positioned as colonized patriarchal objects, and – at the same time – privileged subjects belonging to the race of colonizers. In early Victorian age, this ambivalent position of a white female of a privileged class is actualized by the main female character of the anticolonialist (Ch. Heywood) novel by E. Bronte: in *Wuthering Heights* Catherine Earnshaw's life is abruptly cut short by the collision of these two contradicting and basically inhuman female role models.

Anticolonialist message of *Wuthering Heights* was preceded by abolitionist discourse of English female literature of 18th-19th cent. – as well as by “governess novels” of the period and by great Victorian novels of 1840s (W. Thackeray, Ch. Bronte, etc.).

Heart of Darkness continues and develops the great humanist tradition of English *belles-lettres*: in this tradition two “other worlds” – the world of black people and the world of females are correlated; according to Conrad's text, they both deserve protection and care – for the beauty of the world (both natural and spiritual) is impossible without them. Narrator's (Charles Marlowe's) spiritual sensitivity towards the “other world” of women culminates in his talk to the Intended: his lie about Kurtz's last words is a white lie – for it saves the fragile inner world of a lonely Victorian woman – and, consequently, her life.

Conrad's humane attitude to females is en rooted in Victorian tradition (and, if seen wider), in the humanist outlook of English writers beginning with J. Chaucer, Ch. Marlowe and W. Shakespeare – up to A. Behn, H. Fielding and great Victorian novelists of 1800-40's.

Heart of Darkness and *Lord Jim*, constituting a unique diology about colonizers and the colonized and being intended for “men's reading”, also belong to traditional “male” discourse of far-off countries, obviously follow the great tradition of novels of 1840's as well as late Victorian romanticists and early modernists. In *Lord Jim*, two “other” worlds (those of indigenous people, and females) are *united* by the female character of Jim's beloved Creole Jewel of Dutch/Malay origin. It appears, that through this character Conrad embodies a *new* type of model female – Western European daughter of Malay islands, thus innovatively modifying popular socio-cultural and literary type of a New Woman. The jewel metaphor implied by the heroine's proper name is actualized through the comic local myth about Tuan Jim, keeping his magic emerald on his Malayan Beloved's bosom. Conrad creates a basically new understanding of racial and cultural interaction perspectives – and a new vision of female ideal. This is a perspective of a cross-racial hybridity outlining

the vistas of a new (hybridic) development of the “New Woman” socio-cultural (and literary) type.

Conrad's innovation in treating the New Woman issue lies in the basically new – *other* ethnic material: he creates an image of *another race* (non-white) *female*. This racially and culturally hybridic type is reminiscent of the type of a poor *white* woman, artistically embodied by Ch. Bronte in *Jane Eire* and *Villette*: this is a self-made woman capable of making her life and living by herself. In the mid-20th century the type of *racially other* poor self-made New Woman was evolved by G. Green through the character of Fuong – Vietnamese dancer freely and coolly choosing between two well-off Anglo-Saxon males (“Quiet American”).

Hybridity issue, implied by Jewel's character, is supported (and deepened) by an *other* male character – that of Dayn Warris – a young Malay, endowed with best traits of a white male. Jewel's character hybridizes eternal best qualities of both males and females – regardless of their race: common sense, equanimity, creativeness, sense of responsibility and absence of parasitic ways and habits.

The article touches upon parasitic ways and habits culturally “inherited” by Kurtz's Intended from her female predecessors – white Daughters of England – mistresses of English households giving birth and upbringing to many generations of the colonizers' race. *Lord Jim* sketches a romantic image of a new (historically approaching) world – the “*other*” world which nucleus is constituted by *other* (“hybridic”) representatives of *other* race – by its best representatives: a woman (Jewel) and a man (Dain Waris). The death of the latter and the colorless existence of the former after her beloved's death is caused by an outstanding and seemingly flawless *white* man – Lord (Tuan!) Jim whose moral flawlessness is openly questioned by the author through his dialogue with the “villain of the piece” – white pirate Brown whose origins disturbingly resemble those of Jim's.

So (that's the way) Conrad's concept of race and gender in the texts under study follows the tradition of English anticolonialist discourse of XVI-XIX cent.: Conrad enriched artistic and sociological innovations of Christopher Marlowe and female novels about colonizing (and *other* exploiting) practices. He used the artistic

discoveries of great Victorian novelists having paid special attention to the characters of indigenous race (in *Lord Jim*). This attention in particular might have been triggered (provoked) by the “hybridic” conscience of the author ethnically and culturally belonging to the colonized (Polish) people and, consequently, inclined to deep reflections upon the problems of *any* colonized nation.