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SPACE WHICH THE *OTHER* INHABITS: THE POLITICS OF IMPERIALISM IN *THE HEART OF DARKNESS* AND *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

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Abstract

Unlike Edward Said, who insisted that, while demystifying the hypocrisy of imperial mastery, Joseph Conrad still remained a faithful employee of the imperial system and a colonial writer basically, the approach taken here goes in a different direction. It is argued that the narrative strategies, applied masterfully in both novels, serve, in fact, to reveal a lethal politics of space which generates otherness in such a way that the superior attitude towards the ideologically constructed other has become a pattern one is expected to take for granted. In both novels, it is this imperial mechanism that commands the central space of both action and meaning. The characters are defined in terms of their position towards the oppressive politics which, after having internalized it successfully, they either defend and promote, or, like Conrad's controversial narrator, start to question, showing themselves and others, as well as the reader, that it is neither inevitable nor desirable. Some of them, like Adela Quested and doctor Aziz in *A Passage to India*, are faced with a most harrowing ordeal of (self)-examination, which results in a spatial displacement for both characters, but appears to be the first necessary step towards acknowledging a full subjectivity to the Other. Here, the process of othering has gone both ways – the imperial othering is coupled with the othering of the white British woman – the idea being to show the inner workings of the mechanism in which the borderline between the victimized and the victimizer is not at all so clearly defined or transparent. The underlying idea of the necessity of self-recognition and the consistent focus on the inner space where otherness is either denied or acknowledgded is what contributes to the relevance of the two tales, going beyond the time and the historical context in which both of them originated.

Key words: E.M. Forster, Joseph Conrad, narrative ambiguities, politics of space, imperial othering, gender dynamics.

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ПРОСТОР КОЈИ НАСЕЉАВА *ДРУГИ*: ПОЛИТИКА ИМПЕРИЈАЛИЗМА У РОМАНИМА *СРЦЕ ТАМЕ* И *ЈЕДНО ПУТОВАЊЕ У ИНДИЈУ*

Апстракт

У раду се разматрају механизми другости као делотворна средства просторног измештања и поробљавања које намеће политика империјализма у романима *Срце таме* Џозефа Конрада и *Путовање у Индију* Е. М. Форстера. Рад заступа тезу да су аутори ова два романа одлично разумели суптилну стратегију ових механизама, што се показује и на примеру крајње ефектно спроведене наративне концепције. Кроз специфичан уметнички чин деконструкцијског огољавања ових механизама и њихове родне динамике, указује се на погубност одузимања субјективности које подједнако погађа жртву, али и оног ко настоји да другачију субјективност прикаже као инфериорну *Другост*.

Кључне речи: Е.М. Форстер, Џозеф Конрад, наративне стратегије, политика простора, империјална другост, родна динамика.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, a review (on the 100 best novels) in the British *Guardian* claimed that E.M. Forster's most successful work was eerily prescient on the subject of empire in spite of a subsequent disclaimer from the author himself.[1] What Conrad and Forster share in this regard is that both novels have been recognised as masterpieces of modernist literature, and yet both have received an exceptional amount of negative reviews at the same time. One of the most infamous accusations in contemporary criticism has been directed to none other than Conrad himself and his *Heart of Darkness*, which has been called "bloody racist" in its dehumanizing portrayal of both Africa and African people.[2] This particular defamation and Achebe's essay itself have become exemplary in some critical circles and a token of “a type that is becoming increasingly popular in poststructuralist criticism” (Curtler, 1997: 30). In much the same way, Forster's name has become “a token for error or lamentable naiveté, whether he is presented as an illustration of the fallacies of liberal humanism, or as a last remnant of British imperialism, or as a practitioner of traditional narrative methods

[1] In 1957, E.M. Forster was looking back in old age and he actually wrote that the late-empire world of *A Passage to India* no longer exists, either politically or socially. The basic claim of the review, however, is that approaching 100 years after its composition the novel seems to be as "dated" now as ever.

[2] The accusation came from the reputed Nigerian critic, Chinua Achebe, a novelist himself. "The Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*" was published in *Massachusetts Review* (1977) and has been reprinted many times since and widely anthologized.

who lacks self-consciousness about the ambiguities of language" (Armstrong, 1992: 365).

One of the central ideas discussed here is the opposite claim: due to the self-conscious dimension of language and the subtle play in narrative authority and points of view, the politics of othering, which both novels succeed in demystifying, is ultimately revealed as a lethal strategy of language claiming the authority it does not possess. When the language adopts a deceiving posture of transparency, the mechanism of othering is free to do its harmful work and the truths appear deceptively to be just within reach. If analysed closely, the narrative strategies of both novels are seen as aiming at exactly the opposite, making it only fair to say that negative critical reception has failed to appreciate the important conflicts and ambiguities contained both in the compositional and linguistic structure. Both works have been already discussed in much detail, *Heart of Darkness* having been analysed perhaps more than any other work of literature, and over the years it has become possible to understand that what makes them such intriguing and fascinating literature is the result of their unique propensity for ambiguity, so much so that trying to get hold of the novel's meaning has become equal to "trying to catch smoke with your hands. The very act of describing it makes it harder to grasp," which in turn makes the challenge "all the more enticing" (Jordison, 2015).

From the historical background, just as *Heart of Darkness* is based on a real journey the author took up the Congo river in 1890 and during the horrific rule of King Leopold II of Belgium, we learn that in 1919, when Forster had already written some seventy pages of his novel, there was a gruesome incident at a Sikh festival in the northwestern part of India – the Amritsar Massacre – when, at the order of Colonel Dyer to the British Indian army, more than a thousand nonviolent protesters lost their lives in a ten-minute ceaseless fire. Forster had been clear about his anti-imperial stance even before this heinous massacre, but now he was faced with a problem of chronological issue, and his solution was to write the novel *out of time*. His decision was to make no reference to dates but to offer a novel that still hopes for connection. Just as the India of the novel is depicted, the call for connection, however, is "not a promise, only an appeal" (Symondson, 2016).

THE SPACE WHICH THE OTHER INHABITS IN A PASSAGE TO INDIA

This sense of truth, which was guiding Forster throughout the turmoil of political and historical chaos that he stood a witness to, led him to the conclusion that when faced with a political storm, or violence and cruelty on a massive scale, the last sanctuary of our sense of humanity that we must never betray should always be the capacity for tolerance,

sympathy and love. Although very much aware that sometimes love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State, what Forster was actually saying – while proclaiming his creed of the personal relations – was that in practice we cannot really hope to defend democracy unless we recognize the importance of what could be termed as the *aristocracy of spirit*. It is a specific form of aristocracy – that of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky – as he did not hesitate to proclaim, emphasizing that these aristocrats do not belong to a particular nation or class. On the contrary, he believed, they are to be found in all nations and classes, regardless of time or particular circumstances, and there is always a sort of instantaneous understanding and companionship when they meet. What they represent is the true human tradition, "the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos," because they are capable of transcending the boundaries of class or race, or any such artificially constructed ghettoes of the mind, which are also always spaces of political subordination and oppression. It is this focus on the importance and travails of the personal relationship that puts a special mark on his fictional account of the British rule in India, and it is the intent of this paper to show that far from losing the critical acuity of its anti-imperial perspective because of it, the novel has actually gained much in its enduring political impact and authenticity.

The friendship between the Indian doctor and the former schoolmaster in Chandrapore is portrayed as truly sincere at the beginning and yet the two friends seem to be hopelessly at odds with each other when they meet again in a different space of the Indian state, and after all the tribulations of the past have ended. The reader is made to see that the problem these two people are faced with is ultimately related to the fact that they have never really been on equal terms, one still being the representative of the imperial power in spite of all the affection and loyalty he demonstrated publicly for his friend. His sympathy and compassion – which are certainly to the credit of Fielding – somehow miss the mark here, not going as far as doctor Aziz apparently expects. The notion of India being independent, free from the British rule, which the Indian doctor is not just passionate about but adamant in his conviction that it is the only just outcome, as well as the cause they should both share enthusiastically, is met with mockery on the part of Fielding, who can't help but see the British Empire as protective rather than oppressive. What the reader is made to see is that the arrogance of the imperial outlook has been so thoroughly ingrained that even the most compassionate and friendly of the British can only laugh at the apparent absurdity of any such notion or proclamation of a free India. Blinded by this ideological lie that even Fielding considers to be a self-evident truth, his affection for Aziz comes out just as impotent as the rage Aziz feels himself at not being able to communicate his own truth about India – the righteous claim

that imperial subjection must and will be thrown off if not during or by his generation, then certainly in the future. The very same applies to the truth about their friendship, which for Aziz is just blatantly impossible as long as it stands on unequal terms. Accordingly, the accusation that Forster's own understanding and criticism of the imperial project did not go far or deep enough is perhaps most convincingly refuted in the way he showed why it was impossible for these two people to remain friends, in spite of the strong affection they had for each other.

> "Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want." But the horses didn't want it — they swerved apart: the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temple, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they emerged from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices "No, not yet," and the sky said "No, not there." (Forster, 1987: 289)

Eventually, Aziz and Fielding must go their separate ways, the impossibility of their friendship remaining part of something that is much stronger than their personal affection for each other. The narrative strategy used by Forster makes this painfully clear, in that the tragedy of this companionship which is not to be – not yet and not there – is not seen as the result of any personal deficiencies on their part but the powers that are far beyond their influence or control. As Hunt Hawkins has aptly put it, people cannot establish a friendship of equals when the Raj is based on an inequality of power and all relationships are ultimately subordinated to the political reality (Hawkins, 1983: 56). The image of the two horses going in opposite directions, because it is not yet time for them to stay together, and because there are forces preventing this union which transcend the realm of personal friendship and affection, has the effect of a most powerful indictment of the imperialist enterprise that Forster was able to communicate to his contemporaries and his readers of the future. Surely, the novel would have ended on a much more optimistic note if Fielding had actually managed to step out of the imperialist matrix, but the power of this piercing image is what remains to haunt the reader and is, apparently, the only possible and appropriate closure that Forster was able to come up with. So, it is not ultimately about certain people being intolerant and nasty, or certain British people being intolerant, as the manner in which some critics have chosen to interpret the novel, but rather about showing that intolerance is the result of the unequal power relationship between the English and the Indians – intolerance being at the root of the imperialistic premise itself. The final relationship between England and India, as has been noticed by critics already, is that of the ruler to his subordinate, and the narrative strategy throughout the novel works ultimately to this effect. The corruption of individual relationships

is inevitable because they necessarily must happen within the system which is based on the corrupt premise. Consequently, the novel is not only a lament on the failure of friendship, but is basically about a much more insidious corruption which makes friendship impossible.

GENDER DYNAMICS AS A FORM OF OTHERING: TWO ENDINGS OF THE SAME STORY

There is a certain discrepancy between the novel and the film version in that the ending of the otherwise magnificent film by David Lean (1984) has to a certain extent downplayed this important focus on politics. Significantly, unlike the novel, the film version closes in the spirit of contrition and reconciliation: Aziz having realized his mistake in thinking that Fielding had married the woman who brought the charge of attempted rape against him is presented writing a letter to Adela Quested, back in England, apologizing for his inability at the time to understand the magnitude of her sacrifice, as well as the courage it took her to withdraw the charges and become an exile or outcast herself. It may seem contradictory to claim that David Lean's option for this conciliatory gesture – in a radically different closure – has a political relevance of its own and is far from any involuntary or deliberate misreading or betrayal of the novel. In fact, his decision to round off the story with the image of Adela taking one quick look at the rain outside and then closing the curtains in a brusque gesture of resignation is not just a powerful poetics of its own, but the two have somehow become complementary endings to the same story, which Lean presumably believed to be the kind of ending Forster himself would not have objected to. The film director's focus on Adela in the ending scene is justified not only because she has been the catalyst for the events throughout the story – leading to the charge of rape, the subsequent humiliation of the Indian doctor, and the spectacle of superiority and hypocrisy of the British administrators revealed in its most obtuse and brutal form. The crucial significance of this different ending is in the fact that Adela herself is rendered a victim of the very same ideological matrix, the pattern which turns Aziz into the other – the one who is guilty because he is not *one of us*, just because he is different. The imperialist strategy of *othering* has acquired an important gender aspect reflected in the way Adela is treated in court when, in a moment of epiphany, she declares Aziz innocent while, at the same time, her overwhelming feeling is that of her breakdown being essentially related to her inner conflict about marrying her fiancée, the stuffy and passionless city magistrate, Heaslop. It is also significant that her mental collapse in court is initially triggered by the ridicule she receives after the prosecutor could not resist the urge to touch upon his favourite topic – *oriental pathology* – proclaiming what in his words is the general truth that the dark races are physically attracted

by the fair, but not really *vice versa*.[3] In this mockery of a trial presided, apparently, by the Indian judge who is desperately trying to assume some pretense of authority, the enunciation of a blatantly racist stereotype – proclaimed to be an indisputable fact of science – is met by an unexpected remark which seems to be coming from nowhere, from the ceiling, as the text says, or from nobody in particular – *Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?* (Forster, 1987: 202).

Significantly, this humiliating comment is no other than a reflection of what Aziz felt with relation to the charge, the kind of feeling that Fielding is justified in naming *sexual snobbery* since the doctor was not offended so much by the charge itself as he was enraged by the accusation coming from a woman who, according to the standards he holds, had no personal beauty. And here comes one of the crucial parts in the novel, with the words that Fielding does not say aloud, but which – unspoken – proclaim the most devastating truth. The words are meant for Aziz and his misguided notion about the true cause of his humiliation, and even if they are not said in connection to the imperial mission, Fielding has touched upon the very heart of the matter:

> Sensuality, as long as it is straightforward, did not repel him, but this derived sensuality – the sort that classes a mistress among motor-cars if she is beautiful, and among eye-flies if she isn't – was alien to his own emotions, and he felt a barrier between himself and Aziz whenever it arose. It was, in a new form, the old, old trouble that eats the heart out of every civilization: snobbery, the desire for possessions, creditable appendages; and it is to escape this rather than the lusts of the flesh that saints retreat into the Himalayas. (Forster, 1987: 220)

Just because she doesn't meet the standards of macho requirements, Adela seems to Aziz to be equally repellent as he is made repellent himself because he does not meet some other standards and is, therefore, worthy only of contempt in the eyes of the white oppressor. The humiliation he feels is, unfortunately, not so much about the charge of rape as it is about the seemingly unworthy object of rape. The imperialist othering

[3] This is just one among many instances in the novel of imperial gestures of appropriation, showing how closely related knowledge is to power. In his analysis of Forster and the politics of interpretation, Armstrong mentions the importance of the fact that in his first encounter with the British Aziz is dismissed with the very same disparaging gesture of objectification, denying his status of a fellow human being. The behaviour of the two ladies who take his carriage while ignoring his very existence – *being full of their own affairs* – is paradigmatic of the way the British in the novel establish the hegemony of their own privileged position. "Whether in the form of regarding others as beneath notice or of categorizing them according to present ideas, knowing is an act of taking power over others if it is not a reciprocal recognition which respects each person's right to self-definition" (Armstrong, 1992: 368).

which has turned him into a victim – the object lacking integrity and deserving no respect – has been at work there already, and it is precisely why David Lean cannot be charged with losing focus on politics and imperialism, having changed the ending to be not just about Fielding and Aziz, but even more essentially – about Aziz and Adela. In her study of the ways the imperial projects of the West actually functioned, Anne McClintock (1995) shows precisely that imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere – a disagreeable fact of history external to our sense of identity – but had its own gender dynamics with the underlying idea of the subdued feminine as the central element although it has been traditionally ignored in the overall picture of imperial plunder and racial dispossession.

THE STRATEGIES OF OTHERING IN CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS

The reader's expectations that he will be offered a story which makes clear distinctions between good and evil, civilization and savagery, and ultimately the self and the other are frustrated from the very beginning here. There are unmistakable signals blurring all the expected boundaries and they appear already in the prologue, setting the scene (Marlow and his friends waiting for a turn of the tide on a boat on the Thames) and describing the place where narration is going to happen. And not surprisingly, the place chosen by the author is London, the greatest city in the world, and the very heart of civilization as it used to be seen by the first readers of Conrad.[4] The story unfolds while the sun is setting and when in the midst of light and tranquility there appear the first glimpses of darkness introducing a sense of an ominous but undefined threat.

> A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth (Conrad, 2007: 3).

Darkness, it seems, is more than just the setting of the sun because all of a sudden, just as the story is about to start, the mournful gloom hints to a darkness that relates to the human spirit, suggesting that it is not coming from some particular place beyond what is here and now, and neither is it something that will stay safely out of reach. It is not long before the reader understands that the tale which is already on its way is not going to be the usual seafaring adventure; there is a warning in the way the atmosphere has changed dramatically, a sinister gloom apparently approaching out of nowhere, so it could be here that it starts, or here that we should

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[4]Actually, the very same terms were used by the mayor of London after the gruesome attacks that happened on the Westminster bridge in recent history.

start looking for it, and see it for what it really is about. To the innocent reader, this unexpected twist of perception, the gloom that is seen to approach, mournful and brooding, in the midst of light – clear and unstained at first, and in the very heart of civilization – may just be vaguely disturbing; he could still choose to ignore it. But choosing to ignore would actually repeat the response of Marlow's listeners – all people of trade and business, sitting aboard and waiting for the weather conditions to change favorably so they can resume their work undisturbed.

As far as gender dynamics is concerned, some critics seem to have reproduced the same gesture of averting their gaze from this mournful gloom, focusing instead, as Elaine Showalter has done, on the way Marlow deliberately misleads Kurtz's Intended into believing that his last word was her name and that his overall mission in Africa has been that of a dedicated civil servant on his noble duty to his country. Showalter's reading of Conrad's tale (Showalter, 1997: 1495-99) has the intention of deconstructing or laying bare Marlow's deceptive objectivity, which in her reading is only a mask of hidden contempt for the woman who, unlike man, cannot handle the brutality of realistic presentation. She should, therefore, be spared the truth and for the sake of her weakness should be offered a comforting lie. The girl stays convinced that her fiancée was a paragon of virtue and high ideals, and Marlow's words seem to encourage this interpretation even more: "It's queer how out of touch with truth women are," says the narrator to his male audience sitting on a boat, "they live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be" (Conrad, 2007: 14). Showalter, however, does not stop to question if Marlow, an intradiegetic narrator[5] who is both outside and inside the events being narrated, should be identified with the author himself; his perspective is justly defined as prejudiced and misogynist, but there is nothing in the text to suggest that the reader is encouraged to identify with him or take this limited perspective as that of the author himself[6]. Actually, by focusing on Marlow's sexist remarks about women and his equally patronizing treatment of Kurtz's Intended, we are bound to miss the most subversive aspect of the tale. By showing Marlow to be an advocate of the patriarchal values of masculine domination, and then

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[5] The term was proposed by the French literary theorist Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), and has become an important conceptual distinction in contemporary narratology.

[6] Cedric Watts mentions other critics in this regard insisting at the same time on the importance of what Edward Said wrote about the function of a truly critical analysis: "It is the critic's job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up to historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests" (Watts, 2012: x). These words gain additional significance in light of Said's own attempt to read a certain politics into Conrad, folding the novel into a dogma of culture and imperialism.

proclaiming him the mouthpiece for the author, the critic has in a way repeated the gesture of not seeing – the one we see in the way Marlow's listeners remain curiously untouched, mentally paralyzed, and quite unable to respond to the horror he has been telling them about.

The narrative strategy applied is one of the subtlest features of the text and it has to do with the dramatization of Marlow's uncertainties, of his tentativeness, his groping for affirmations that his own narrative subsequently questions. Through Marlow, this luminal and protean novella stresses the importance of negotiating alternative viewpoints, which, hopefully, will end up generating more profound ways of understanding. This is why Watts goes on to claim that a commentator who declares Conrad racist or sexist could be just imposing on the writer the readily available stereotypes but that, "at its best, the tale questions the process of imposing stereotypes" (Watts, 2008: 31). It is even more so because a pathology of domination has been most visible in some of the crucial passages of *Heart of Darkness* – when the reader is almost shocked into realizing, or intuiting at the very least, that behind the greed and the plunder, behind all the suffering that comes out of this rapacious desire for more ivory, there is something even more sinister and disturbing about the whole project. In light of Conrad's suggestive writing, this geographical, but at the same time metaphysical heart of darkness could be approached on two different levels – one which allows the reader to react following the pattern of those who are given the role of a fictive addressee – they listen, but do not hear – and the second which is more demanding – urging the reader to make a step beyond, where darkness does not remain safely out of the picture.

Marlow's gradual and difficult progress towards the Inner Station – the place where Kurtz is to be found and returned to Europe, because he has betrayed the mission he was entrusted with and regressed to the savagery of those he had come to enlighten – is just one possible approach to how we can interpret the metaphor of darkness. His betrayal is deplorable, but we may still opt to see it as the failure of one particular individual, somebody who once used to be a decent man, the way Ronny Heaslop is said to have been in *A Passage to India*. In truth, the text insists that Kurtz was even more than that – he was quite exceptional in this regard, the torchbearer and the best representative of what Europe had to offer. And still we may decide to blame this failure on the consuming savagery of *the other*, and the moral deficiency of this particular individual who did not know how to handle the dark forces of this other element. Sadly, he proved unequal to the lofty ideals he had been entrusted with, the spark of the sacred fire he was supposed to bring to the realm of darkness having burnt out all too quickly and this enlightening mission just failed miserably. And yet, the problem with this approach is that it is shown to repeat the gesture demonstrated by the narrative pattern itself because that

is precisely how Marlow's audience would have reacted if they had even bothered to hear the tale. We learn from the frame narrator that most of them have actually fallen asleep before the tale ended, but what is certain is that these people go back to their business pretty much unimpressed by the tale of horror that Marlow has been narrating.

But what if this *other* has actually been part of the self all along and this (metaphysical) heart of darkness is present already in the very endeavours to identify the self with reason and light only[7]. Marlow himself cannot communicate this message in words which are strong enough to shock his audience out of their self-complacency, but his failure is precisely why we can still claim, together with Watts, that the text has retained its brilliant capacity to outsmart the critic. It is because his own complacency seems to mirror that of the business people who choose to stay unruffled by the story, which they regard as irrelevant for both the world they inhabit and their own sense of identity. This unstated irony is inherent to the text and Marlow seems to be aware of it all, both the terrifying unreality of the story he has been telling and his inability to articulate any clear or straightforward meaning, which makes him stop at one point to cry in despair at his own impotence:

> Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams… (Conrad, 2007: 32-33)

Part of his confusion and rage stems from his own uncertainty, his insights clashing with the way he was taught to look and perceive, so that some of what he says comes to contradict what he has just said before; his own uncertainty matches the urge to recount this compelling experience in a way that reminds one of Coleridge and his *Ancient Mariner*, narrating endlessly while desperately seeking redemption which he knows will not come. So, with the setting of the sun, the greatest town on earth has unex-

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[7] McClintock's views are actually quite in line with the approach exemplified by Said and Showalter (she quotes and follows Homi Bhabha here), but the central thesis of her book is still relevant in its effective demystifying of the hidden mechanisms underlying the imperial projects. So, even if she claims that Conrad's mimic man – meaning the African who works the ship's boiler – is less disruptive of colonial authority than he might at first appear, and that "his parodic imperfection is consistent with the colonial narrative of African degeneration" (McClintock, 1995: 66), her theory about the othering – as being inherent to the imperial conquest and complicit with the gender dynamics which is always simultaneously at work as well – is much broader in scope and can be put to good use in this context regardless of the interpretative stand going in the opposite direction when it comes to reading *Heart of Darkness*.

pectedly been referred to as that *monstrous town*, its place marked ominously in the sky and the brooding gloom corresponding strikingly with the way, we learn, Marlow is different from ordinary seamen who like telling their stories of adventure. Theirs are stories that possess direct simplicity, whereas to him, we read, the meaning is not inside like a kernel, but somehow enveloping the tale "which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze" (Conrad, 2007: 6). In this narration within narration, Marlow's and the frame narrator's, boundaries seem to blur imperceptibly with the hypnotizing impression that one has been listening to a menacing dream, in which a frustratingly elusive darkness is suddenly being transferred to the space where we do not wish to find it, but which seems to have been there from the very beginning, and has now begun to envelop the tale altogether.

Another significant aspect of Conrad's exquisite narration is making a parallel and then undoing some of it to make a point which is presented as important, which is itself being undone dramatically in what follows. Marlow's comparisons, however, seem to have a kind of lulling effect on the audience, and Marlow has a feeling that he has to proceed cautiously because too much truth at once would frighten his listeners into choosing some other entertainment instead. The narration works to the effect of actually contradicting its basic premise of the redeeming idea of efficiency, and it goes to pieces pretty soon when Marlow starts to recount the building of the railway and the detonation of the cliff which was not in the way, the objectless blasting appearing to be all the work that is going on. The redeeming idea crumbles away at this appalling spectacle of "efficiency", which in truth is just the utter misery of the natives. The reader, however, has already been prepared for this ironic twist of perception in a striking image of the French ship shelling into space with no obvious reason. The image is so devoid of sense and filled with such insane absurdity that Marlow describes it as the point when he felt he no longer belonged to the world of straightforward facts – it was his first glimpse of the hypocrisy and waste camouflaged as the bringing of progress, and the first step of initiation into the oppressive domain of civilized selfhood that he can no longer identify with or attach any meaning to it.

The space which the other inhabits is a silent wilderness– and the invasion is "fantastic" not only because it brings such devastating misery all around, but also because it is seen to be ultimately senseless and futile. Back to the Company's headquarters in Belgium (*the sepulchral city*), Marlow has to face Kurtz's fiancée, who is in deep mourning (although more than a year has already passed since his death), overcome with grief and full of elevated sentiments about the man she believes she knew best. All that remains for him is to repeat the gesture of Eliot's Prufrock and not dare disturb the Universe. The truth is shown to be too horrible to be revealed to those who are either too immersed in their own lives to care,

or because their mistaken convictions are so strongly ingrained in their own sense of identity that such confrontation could prove ruinous. And this truth is not just about Kurtz and his tremendous failure (to live up to the lofty ideals of his self-image), but the fact that he was deemed the best that the civilized world had produced – and the best has proved to be hollow to the core.[8]

THE MOST HORRIBLE REVERSAL: THE OTHER AS THE HOLLOW CORE WITHIN

Through this effective strategy of reversal, the reader is left to deal with the paradox that Marlow's listeners have remained so shockingly unresponsive[9] to the tale of such strength and impact. The horror of it all is that by failing to meet the other on equal terms, the abysmal hollowness that Kurtz is plunged into is not just the consequence of his own personal deficiency – because all Europe has contributed to his making. And Marlow doesn't hesitate to declare that. It is this same Europe still boastful of all its progress, democracy, and achievements in spite of all the atrocities done to the other on behalf of its ideals and the noble dedication to human rights and freedom. The unambiguous message of the last words in the commissioned report which Kurtz never sent – *Exterminate all the brutes* – is what eventually stays naked when the tiny veneer of civilized morality has come off. These are the terrifying remains of what once seemed to be the redeeming idea, as well as the last articulate sentence this man is sending back to Europe. It is a horribly ironic reversal of the proclaimed objective to spread the light of nobility and civilize those who are still in the dark. The addition to this ironic reversal (of what was meant to be the sacred fire of the civilizing project) is that the lingering image is that of Marlow sitting in the dark, no longer able to see the audience he is addressing. His story is finished, but his audience is oddly unaffected by the horror of what has been narrated. So, it is just himself and the reader who remain to be haunted by the image of Kurtz, who in his final moments

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[8] T. S. Eliot actually referred to Conrad explicitly by inserting the words "Mistah Kurtz—he dead" at the beginning of his poem *The Hollow Men*, quoting the "manager's boy" when he announced the death of Kurtz to the crew.

[9] Staying unresponsive is, however, also possible in criticism and it is precisely how Richard Rorty described the attitude of the critics who wrote on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in an anthology demonstrating various methods and approaches to literature. What he says was evident in these texts is that none of the readers had been enraptured or destabilised by *Heart of Darkness*: "I got no sense that the book had made a big difference to them, that they cared much about Kurtz, or Marlow, or the woman with 'helmeted head and tawny cheeks' whom Marlow sees on the bank of the river. These people, and that book, had no more changed these readers' purposes than the specimen under the microscope changes the purpose of the histologist" (Rorty, 1992: 107).

looked into the abyss of his own ideals, pronouncing his final judgment about it. It is a judgment of the man devastated by the hollowness of his own heart, being also the heart of the best part of the world which he had been chosen to promote, glorify, and represent.

One final twist of the narrative strategy is that Marlow eventually refrains from revealing this horrible truth to Kurtz's Intended even though the text, through his narrator's closing act of withdrawal, does exactly the opposite. This chivalrous gesture becomes one last irony because the act of dethroning her hero, and everything that she used to hold sacred, may have proved disastrous for the one whose idealized image of her beloved, and the noble sacrifice he was committed to, had fossilized into her only spiritual shelter. So finally, it seems that apart from Marlow, who has eventually thrown off the burden of carrying this truth alone, the reader is the only one who is left to face and deal with this shocking reversal, and hopefully find redemption in the courage to act upon it.

A similarly unsettling subversion of the mechanism which keeps producing comfortable but (self)-destructive certainties is at work in Forster and his novel, too. The incident which is at the heart of the novel's plot has remained a mystery to date and Forster, who was living until 1970, was plagued by readers for decades with the question of what really happened during the ill-fated visit to the Marabar Caves. His response was always frustratingly adamant, definitive and immovable: "I don't know". It is only fitting that we should appreciate Forster's eagerness to remain silent and let the reader find his own way of coping with the pervasive reverberation of the ou-boum sound (and its extraordinary nullifying effect) of the caves, which remains to haunt the reader and may just succeed in "trivialising the systems and structures that we use to provide order and reassurance" (Symondson, 2016). In a letter to his friend and fellow author, William Plomer, Forster connected the plot's mystery with that of India itself, Miss Quested's experience in the cave remaining an unexplainable muddle just as India is to the white man. With the author's final refusal to provide conclusive answers, lift the veil off his narrative, and spell "the truth", it becomes more than ever up to the reader to engage his imagination and stay tuned to the subtle echoes of both narratives which, in showing so much else, do not fail to show that truth is always at least one step ahead, and has never been meant to be something one could ever hope to take hold of and possess.

Apart from Mrs Moore, who is shown to have always been in tune with this knowledge of the final mystery of human existence and the human need and obligation to supply what the universe itself is lacking, Adela is the one who is given a chance to bring redemption by rising above the trite, the conventional, and the greedy. She is forced to come face to face with a brutal legacy of her culture's misconceptions and deal with her own hollow heart – in its regrettable inability to relate to the other. And in

spite of all the havoc that she has brought along in her misguided attempt to understand India (but not really the people who inhabit it), she eventually proves equal to the task of learning that if the heart stays unresponsive in the equally unresponsive universe, then nothing good can ever come out if. If there is to be a journey towards accepting and embracing the other, and both novels are wonderfully eloquent on its importance, part of it is always bound to be about disillusionment and disquiet. And yet, embracing the idea of a common bond or kinship is the only way which may bring us a step closer to relating with the *Other* in ways which are not destructive. By demonstrating all the tragic consequences of the failure to establish these meaningful connections, both tales succeed in suggesting that this redeeming possibility has always been about learning the most crucial lesson in empathy, humility and imaginative involvement.

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ПРОСТОР КОЈИ НАСЕЉАВА *ДРУГИ*: ПОЛИТИКА ИМПЕРИЈАЛИЗМА У РОМАНИМА *СРЦЕ ТАМЕ* И *ЈЕДНО ПУТОВАЊЕ У ИНДИЈУ*

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Резиме

За разлику од Едварда Саида, који тврди да је Џозеф Конрад, и поред тога што је настојао да демистификује лицемерје империјалне владавине, остао до краја одани упосленик империјалног система, и у својој бити колонијални писац, приступ који овде следимо полази другачијим смером. Рад заговара тезу по којој наративне стратегије – успешно спроведене кроз оба романа – функционишу тако што разоткривају начин на који делује погубна политика измештања која генерише другост. Ову политику препознајемо кроз механизам у коме се супериорност према идеолошки конструисаном *Другом* вешто успоставља као универзални образац који се не доводи у питање. У оба романа, управо је империјални механизам тај кроз који се каналишу радња и значења, а ликови су профилисани кроз своју позицију у односу на политику репресије коју, након успешно спроведене интернализације, и сами заступају и бране, или је доводе у питање – показујући себи и другима, као и самом читаоцу, да она није ни неопходна, нити пожељна. Неки од њих, као Адела Квестид и доктор Азиз из романа *Једно путовање у У индију*, одабрани су као ликови који ће морати да прођу искушење веома потресног суочавања са собом и другима. Оно за последицу има просторно измештање оба учесника, али је то уједно, као што се у роману сугерише, и први неопходни корак ка признавању пуне субјективности другог. Овде се процес конституисања другости одвија у оба правца – начин на који империја конструише *Другог* преклапа се са начином на који бела Енглескиња у роману такође постаје *Други.* Крајњи циљ је у томе да се покаже како овај механизам не дозвољава увек чисту и неупитну транспарентност, или до краја јасно и недвосмислено разграничење између онога ко спроводи репресију и саме жртве.