

The Resonance of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski in Contemporary Culture

3rd Conrad Symposium

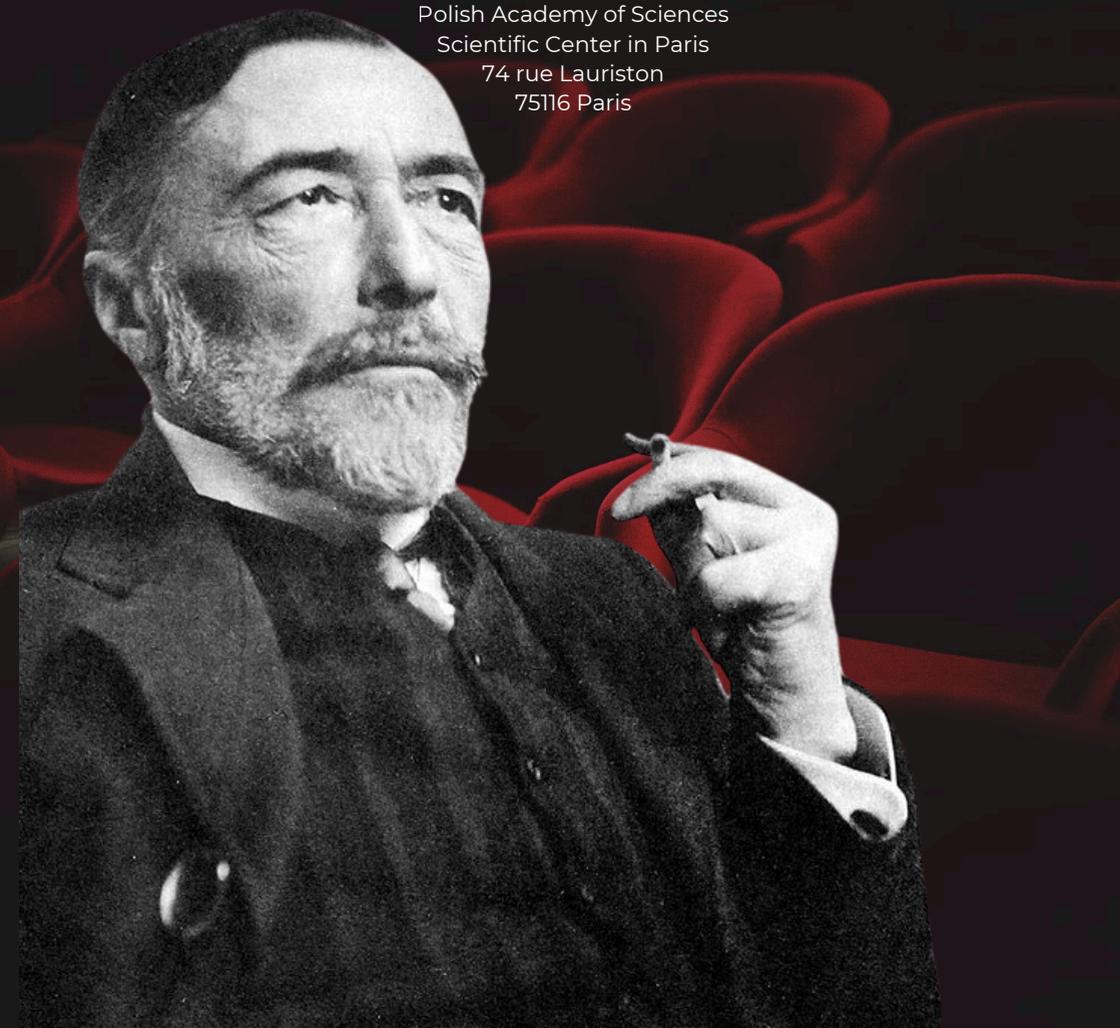
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ABSTRACTS



edited by Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech

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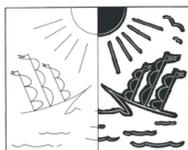


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CONTENTS



Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech Introduction	7
Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech Drowning in Darkness: Carnage, Corporeality, and Colonial Legacy in Michaël Matthys' <i>Kurtz</i>	10
Michel Arouimi Conrad in Monica Vitti's <i>Memories</i>	11
Ellen Burton Harrington Gazing Back: Women in Graphic Novel Adaptations of <i>Heart of Darkness</i> by Anayango and Maiowitz and by Kuper	13
Simla Dogangun Enclosed Currents: Authority and Institutional Collapse from Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> to Tolga Karaçelik's <i>Ivy</i>	14
Jan B. Gordon Havens of Homelessness: People and Money in Conrad's Archipelago Enclaves	16
Robert Hampson Theft: Abdulrazak Gurnah and Conrad's Postcolonial Resonance	19
Nathalie Martinière Mapping <i>Heart of Darkness</i> . A Story of Maps and Colours: J-P. Stassen's illustrations for <i>Coeur des Ténèbres</i>	20

Narugopal Mukherjee The Missed Target and the Disappearing Sanity: Conrad Revisited in <i>Bommaï</i> , an Indian Adaptation of Conrad's <i>The Secret Agent</i>	21
Véronique Pauly The affective uncanny: human and non-human resonances in Conrad's fiction	22
Karol Samsel <i>Lord Jim</i> , Laco Adamik and The Polish Theatre of Television	24
Daniel Vogel The influence of Conrad's fiction on the generation of Polish artists touched by the Second World War: Jan Józef Szczepański and Stanisław Lem	26
Sylwia J. Wojciechowska Conrad at the University in the 21st Century: "Amy Foster" and Young Adult Response	27
Kaoru Yamamoto 'strange people and far off countries': Conradian Sympathies in Takizawa Seiho's <i>The Panther in Ukraine</i> 1950	28
David Jařab <i>Hadí plyn</i>	30
Programme of the Symposium	32



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Introduction

Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski was a man of three cultures: Polish, French, and English. Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in Berdyczów in 1857—then a part of Poland under Russian rule—he led a life marked by movement across borders, languages, and cultural traditions. After early years spent in Poland and France, he served in the British Merchant Navy, traveling to the Dutch East Indies, Australia, the Congo, India, the Caribbean, and South Africa. Though he settled in England, his journeys continued throughout Europe and the United States. Conrad became a transcultural and transnational writer as a result of these experiences, and his fiction and life offer a wealth of perspectives on the interwoven histories of global modernity.¹

The aim of this international symposium is to examine the continuing resonance of Conrad's life and works in the 21st century, across a range of artistic media and national traditions. Conrad's fiction has long inspired critical reflection and artistic engagement. Literary scholars such as Terry Eagleton, Edward Said, and J. Hillis Miller have responded to his oeuvre; philosophers like Jacques Rancière and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe have explored its ethical and aesthetic implications.

¹ Maya Jasanoff, *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World*, London: Penguin Press 2017, p. 9. For an extensive discussion of these issues, see K. Salmons, T. Zulli, *Introduction*. In: K. Salmons, T. Zulli, ed. *Migration. Modernity and Transnationalism in the Work of Joseph Conrad*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021, p. 1-16.

Filmmakers (Chantal Akerman, Rogério Nunes, Rob Lemkin, David Jařab, playwrights (Ingmar Villqist, Tomasz Man), musicians (Tarik O'Regan, Philip Glass, Tadeusz Baird, Krzesimir Debski), graphic artists (Catherine Anyango, Tom Tirabosco, Loic Godart, Benjamin Bachelier, Peter Kuper, Michaël Matthys), and writers (Nikeshia Breeze, Caryl Phillips, J. M. Coetzee, Mario Vargas Llosa, Ewa Kuryluk, Jacek Dukaj, Patrick Deville, among others) have interpreted his work across diverse forms. Conrad's legacy also extends to contemporary media such as comics, graphic novels, art installations, murals, and video games.

The symposium seeks to reflect the multifaceted nature of Conrad's cultural afterlife. One of its central goals is to promote the achievements of national artists inspired by Conrad on a global scale and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge about cultural events—including film and literature festivals, theatre performances, and visual art exhibitions—connected with Conrad in various countries. A further objective is to deepen the understanding of Conrad's Polish heritage and its influence on his worldview and narrative imagination.

In an era marked by social upheaval, political polarization, and resurgent nationalism, Conrad's life and literature offer a valuable model for transcultural dialogue. As Maya Jasanoff observes in *The Dawn Watch*, Conrad's "particular way of looking at the world" remains startlingly relevant: from terrorism and imperialism to the disruptions of global capitalism and immigration, Conrad anticipated many of the anxieties shaping our current moment.² His novels, such as *The Secret Agent*, *Nostromo*, and *Lord Jim*, not only mirror past conflicts but also illuminate the complex interplay of power, technology, and identity that defines the present.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the global dimensions of Conrad's writing. As Stephen Donovan argues, Conrad's literary career "from the very start formed part of a global network of relations," with his works being serialized, translated, and reviewed across continents—from Singapore and France to Poland and the United States.³

² Maya Jasanoff, *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World*, p. 5.

³ S. Donovan, *Introduction: Conrad Under the Sign of the Transnational*, *Studia Neophilologica*, 85: 1-4, 2013, p. 1

Mary Pawlowski has shown how Conrad's novels engage deeply with the excesses of mass culture and global trade, reflecting both Victorian anxieties and contemporary concerns.⁴ His writing, shaped by exile and displacement, has been interpreted as a literary and geopolitical map—what I have called an “auto-bio-atlas”—that charts encounters between real and imagined spaces beyond national boundaries.⁵

This symposium aims to foreground the transnational and cross-cultural aspects of Conrad's legacy. By examining how contemporary artists and scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds engage with Conrad's fiction, we hope to foster international collaboration and introduce new interpretive frameworks for understanding his work. Hopefully, the discussions will highlight how Conrad's writings continue to inspire reflections on cultural difference, migration, and social justice, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of world literature.

In line with Richard Ambrosini's vision of Conrad as a transnational novelist whose innovations prefigure the modernist projects of Pirandello, Svevo, Joyce, and Kafka⁶, this symposium also seeks to recontextualize Conrad's aesthetic and intellectual contributions. As “a Pole and a gentleman from the Ukraine,”⁷ Conrad emerges as a quintessential borderland author—one whose polyphonic literary space opens up possibilities for reimagining national, cultural, and political identities in a global context.

⁴ See M. Pawlowski, *Kicking the Biscuit Tin: Conrad. Mass Culture and Commodity Spectacle. Various Dimensions of the Other in Joseph Conrad's Fiction*. Ed. W. Krajka, Lublin, New York Maria Curie-Skłodowska UP, Columbia UP, 2020, p. 13-50.

⁵ A. Adamowicz-Pośpiech, *From Berdyczów to Bishopsbourne: Conrad's real and imaginary journeys*. In *Migration. Modernity and Transnationalism in the Work of Joseph Conrad*. Eds K. Salmons, T. Zulli. London: Bloomsbury 2021, p. 51-72.

⁶ R. Ambrosini, *Reconceptualizing Conrad as a Transnational Novelist : A Research Programme*. *Studia Neophilologica*, 85: 1-4, 2013, p. 5.

⁷ *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Ed. L. Davies, F. Karl. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986, vol.2, p. 323.

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**Drowning in Darkness: Carnage, Corporeality,
and Colonial Legacy in Michaël Matthys' *Kurtz***

This article explores *Kurtz* (2024), Michaël Matthys' graphic novel, as a reimagining of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through the lens of Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. By examining the depiction of violence, power, and the colonial legacy in Matthys' graphic novel, this paper investigates how the narrative critiques not only the dehumanizing effects of colonialism but also the exercise of sovereignty over life and death in postcolonial settings. Focusing on the interplay between power and the marginalization of certain lives, the article argues that *Kurtz* offers a powerful visual and narrative critique of necropolitical structures. Additionally, while Conrad's novella may be interpreted as a critical exploration of the moral and psychological decay induced by colonialism, Matthys' graphic novel adds a new dimension - one that offers a more direct (immersive?) engagement with the dehumanizing forces of power, violence, and control. The aim of the paper is to show how in the context of colonialism, imperialism, and global inequality, Matthys' *Kurtz* transforms the abstract notions of exploitation into visceral images.

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Conrad in Monica Vitti's *Memories*

I have shown elsewhere the deep influence of Joseph Conrad on Antonioni's film projects. Unsurprisingly, the most remarkable "enigma" in *Heart of Darkness* finds a brief echo in certain pages of *Memories*, the autobiographical work by Monica Vitti (Antonioni's greatest muse), published in 1993 and 1995. In these passages, a vision of the sea closely resembles the description of the "cliff" in *Heart of Darkness*. In Conrad's novella, the cliff symbolizes contradiction—embodied most fully in the figure of Kurtz. Many aspects of Monica's life and vision mirror the experiences of Kurtz. Her mother was, like Kurtz's parents, an embodiment of these internal contradictions. The psychological effects of the contradictions on Kurtz's mind can be compared to Monica's own sensibility, her vision, and ultimately, her descent into madness, foreshadowed in her *Memories*.

For Monica—as for Kurtz—art became a way to transcend trauma. This is not surprising. But the aesthetics of Monica's writing, with its expression of a troubled, questioning mind, can be compared to the hallucinatory landscapes of *Heart of Darkness*. More specifically, the blending of opposites found in both Vitti and Conrad suggests a kind of revival of the Androgynous. While this can have positive connotations, many pages in *Memories* dwell on the destructive effects of mimicry. Some clowns that appear in Monica's memories or imagination seem like negative doubles of the Harlequin character in *Heart of Darkness*.

The theme of the "double" takes many forms in *Memories*, as it does in *Heart of Darkness*. Monica's madness in her later years—she "loses her mind" as she ages—can be interpreted as an answer to Kurtz's final cry: "The horror!"

Her rise and fall may help us understand the meaning behind this enigmatic exclamation. Ultimately, *Memories* can be read as a meditation on art—not only theatrical art—which is another point of connection with Conrad. Vitti loved “words” and speaks of artworks with marvellous imagery. Perhaps she even read the preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*?

**Gazing Back: Women in Graphic Novel Adaptations
of *Heart of Darkness* by Anayango and Mairowitz and by Kuper**

From the Fates that Marlow encounters at the doctor's office to Kurtz's painting of an idealized woman "draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch," *Heart of Darkness* portrays women in indelible imagery that resonates with the novel's larger critique of the self-serving truths of colonialism for Europeans. In this project, I consider two contemporary adaptations, graphic novels by Catherine Anayango and David Mairowitz (2013) and by Peter Kuper (2020), using images of women as a touchstone as these adaptations grapple with ways to render voiceless or even alien characters from Conrad's novel with presence and humanity. As Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech explains, these contemporary adaptations can serve as commentaries on older works, "proposing a new point of view or voicing marginalized groups who were deprived of their voices in the original." Indeed, Anayango and Mairowitz's *Heart of Darkness* eliminates all references to women in the narrative until Marlow finds the painting, inviting the reader to consider Kurtz as the artist channelling contradictory European ideals and more directly framing the depiction of Kurtz's grieving women in the Congo and in Belgium. In contrast, Kuper's text follows Conrad's novel closely, allowing the reader to glimpse the stridency of Marlow's aunt and the ominous Fates prior to his departure for Africa. Through striking images as well as textual cuts and revisions, both graphic novels enhance the pivotal portrayals of the African woman and the Intended by moving them into the foreground as subjects who can return Marlow's gaze and shifting the frame to encompass their presence and emotions more fully.

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**Enclosed Currents: Authority and Institutional Collapse
from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Tolga Karaçelik's *Ivy***

This paper brings Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) into conversation with Tolga Karaçelik's *Ivy* (*Sarmaşık*, 2015), exploring how each work examines the relationship between authority and the breakdown of formal structures. Karaçelik has openly cited Conrad's sea stories as a formative influence, making this comparison both thematically and formally productive. Though they emerge from different historical and narrative contexts, both works ask how power is constituted—not only through institutional systems, but also through perception, temporality, and the conditions of storytelling itself.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the river journey becomes a narrowing psychological descent, where geographic exploration gives way to cognitive and ethical disorientation. *Ivy* reverses that movement: instead of outward motion, it stages confinement; instead of discovery, it turns inward. Set aboard a freighter immobilised off the Suez coast, the film creates a closed world where time takes on a circular rhythm and space becomes a site of pressure and uncertainty. Karaçelik's use of long takes and immersive sound echoes Conrad's fragmented narration and silences, producing a similar atmosphere of growing unease.

Both works show how, in moments of institutional weakness or absence, individuals turn to new frameworks of meaning and order. Authority in these contexts does not simply fill a void—it arises from a collective need for coherence and belief. In both narratives, viewers are denied a clear perspective; instead, they are drawn into the same perceptual and ethical instability experienced by the characters themselves.

Winner of multiple awards, including Best Film at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, Ivy reimagines Conrad's reflections on space, narrative, and power through a contemporary cinematic lens. This paper argues that reading the two works side by side reveals how Conrad's modernist sensibility continues to resonate, particularly in moments of social transformation when questions of leadership, structure, and meaning become newly unsettled. In doing so, I situate *Heart of Darkness* and *Ivy* within the evolving debates of world-literature studies to show how their dialogic energies illuminate—across media and history—the shifting global currents of power, narrative form, and collective imagination.

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Havens of Homelessness:
People and Money in Conrad's 'Archipelago Capitalism'

*'We will be with you as long as the thing runs straight.
But we won't be drawn into any large trouble.'*
(N 79, ital. added)

The provisional nature of Holroyd's investment in the San Tomé silver mine—a “thing” embodying its potential oxidation—suggests that money, like other “outcasts” that inform “archipelago capitalism,” can *drift*. Nowhere more obviously than in the lighter load of silver rescued to give the appearance of preserving Holroyd's risky “interests” during a civil war. Money and people alike become *transactional figures* which (even grammatically) de-nominates transcendent value: “[. . .] he looked upon his own God as a sort of influential partner who got his share of profits in the endowment of churches” (N 71).

The “uprooted [...] unnatural” (V III, v: 217) Heyst of *Victory*, gambles for his “rescued” treasure, Lena, a pastime common to all classes in Conrad: Willems of *An Outcast of the Islands*; Holroyd, General Barrios and ‘Gian Battista of *Nostromo*; de Barral of Chance and Ricardo of *Victory*. Each *play* for what resists easy possession. At the conclusion of *Nostromo* the long-dormant mine has become a joint stock company, the Consolidated San Tomé Mines, with Captain Mitchell, retired from of O.S.N. navigation, as an expatriate shareholder.

Both people (including native “Intendeds”) and unrealized treasure are contested by colonizing rivals, but vulnerable to abandonment as *stranded assets*.

Previous colonial concessions are being transformed into something less *straight*, havens for homeless money and homeless people, often tainted by association or escaping some clouded reputation elsewhere. The telegraph wire and the floating body at sea (Decoud) have become familiar icons of our contemporary world, the pilgrimage of money and people trying to get *out* or *in*. They are parodies of the pilgrims, seeking salvation, aboard the *Patna* in *Lord Jim*.

Extracted raw material in Conrad's earlier *Malay Trilogy* (jute, opium, rattan, tropical woods, macassar) are transformed during the sunset of colonialism, into the creation of a *rentier* society that sustains itself on economic rent: the private capture of unearned value within a speculative profit. Metaphoric hotels for ideological or monetary refugees seeking freedom *from* rather than adventurers seeking freedom *to*, become alternative "settlements."

The French economic historian, Thomas Piketty, foregrounds his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, by reminding us that wealth in Europe radically evolved between 1880 and 1920. Capital in the form of agriculture (and the rents derived therefrom) was transformed into a different capital stock: industrial manufacturing, banks, urban housing. Despite this transformation, a crucial ratio which measures the overall role of capital, remained nearly the same: the total value of capital stock measured in years of national income.

Money earned by investment displaces traditional predatory models of imperialism, but, not unlike Conrad's *drifters*, it too seeks safe havens to protect it from repatriation to the homeland where both questions as to sources and the hand of a new taxman, loom. The Tropical Belt Coal Company of *Victory* is being "wound up," liquidated, thanks to the advent of ships with longer ranges. Heyst and Lena, along with coal tips, are the stranded assets of a former colonial concession, challenged by an invasion of three brigand/adventurers told of hidden gold on Samburan. They resemble the adventurous, disappeared lost gringos searching for gold, with which *Nostramo* commences.

The migration of money and people to ideological or financial typhoon shelters drives the plots of many of Conrad's novels of the period. Borel Castle in Geneva is leased to a group of homeless exiled anarchists in *Under Western Eyes*, reaffirming Switzerland's reputation as a haven for fugitive whatever. *Almayer's Folly* is named after an empty resort hotel, a stranded asset in the Malayan Archipelago. A Raffles Hotel *in situ*, the failed luxury investment hosts a solitary CEO addicted to opium, who manages an alternative salvation: asset *laundering*.

De Barral, initially a lowly bank clerk in *Chance*, establishes the Orb Bank and Sceptre Trust at the edges of the City as covers for a Ponzi scheme that supposedly invests in "harbors and docks on the coast of Patagonia, quarries in Labrador" (C 76-77). He deceives by advertising the moral rewards of "thrift" to the lower classes. After the law puts an end to his deceptions, de Barral's daughter, Flora, is saved from suicide near an abandoned quarry.

These havens anticipate our own future "Special Economic Zones," where secure warehoused deposits unnaturally accumulate (in a variety of *virtual* investment vehicles) with loose regulation and anonymous destination. Eschewing the concept of sovereignty altogether, transient, migratory people and money find refuge in apolitical, "currencies." The "Euro dollar" and crypto currencies, have a largely transactional existence, *de-nominating* fiscal sovereignty. They differ in degree but perhaps not in kind, from the human flotsam becalmed or awaiting postponed redemption in the currents of Conrad's offshore waters.

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Theft: Abdulrazak Gurnah and Conrad's Postcolonial Resonance

Abdulrazak Gurnah's recent novel, *Theft*, begins with a self-deprecating epigraph from *Chance*: 'In a general way it's very difficult for one to become remarkable'. By foregrounding it in this way, Gurnah sets Marlow's observation to resonate against his own fiction, but *Chance* resonates with *Theft* in multiple other ways – as this paper will show. First, there is the title and the action it points towards. At first glance, it might seem to refer to the accusation made against Badar, the central character, a servant in a house in Dar es Salaam in the 1990s, that he has added groceries to the household's weekly bill and sold them to accomplices. As we proceed further into the narrative, it refers more clearly to the theft of money by Badar's father. With this theft of money by the central figure's father, we are beginning to enter into the territory of *Chance* – and de Barral's frauds. However, there are then further thefts in the novel – forged expenses claims or the money that goes missing from the English volunteer worker's flat. However, as Blake Morrison has observed, there are also other sorts of theft that resonate in the novel, including 'stolen childhoods' and the loss of 'dignity, security, identity'. Not to mention 'the expropriations of colonialism'. Here the title 'Theft' operates as the title 'Chance' does in Conrad's novel: foregrounding a concept which the novel engages with in various ways. Perhaps more important, the idea of 'stolen childhood' provides an obvious link between Badar and Flora de Barral, and the search for identity and security is common to both these figures. Both novels engage with trauma and with issues of gender, servitude and economic hardship. The paper will explore how *Theft* can be read through these resonances with *Chance*, but with *Theft* providing an additional post-colonial perspective that brings Conrad into the twenty-first century.

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Mapping *Heart of Darkness*.
A Story of Maps and Colours:
J-P. Stassen's illustrations for *Coeur des Ténèbres*

A key feature in HD is Marlow's fascination with maps, which leads him to apply for a job on "a mighty big river" that fascinates him "as a snake would a bird." In the joint edition of Conrad's African stories (*Heart of Darkness* and "An Outpost of Progress") by Gallimard and Futuropolis¹, Jean-Philippe Stassen has chosen to focus on their role in HD, producing no less than seven maps of Africa that convey both the fascination experienced by Marlow and his questioning of the colonialist process reflected in his approach.

My contention is that Marlow's fascination with maps resonates with the 21st century's idea that the link between reality and what is represented in maps is not straightforward: radical geographers argue that their function is to establish norms and rules that serve to organise reality and therefore master it.² I intend to analyse how, following Conrad's example, Stassen relies alternately on the aesthetic fascination with maps and on their pseudo-scientific dimension in order to insist on (and help us visualize) power relationships in the novella. "Marked with all the colours of a rainbow," like the harlequin, Stassen's maps reflect the novella's capacity to transform reality into images that challenge the pseudo-scientific discourse of colonialism, as well as mirror the 21st century's insistence on their fictional, performative dimension. In other words, is Marlow a proto-radical geographer?

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Coeur des Ténèbres*. Précédé d'Un avant-poste du progrès. Traductions de G. Jean-Aubry et André Ruyters, relues par Dominique Goy-Blanquet. Illustrés et commentés par Jean-Philippe Stassen et Sylvain Venayre, Gallimard/Futuropolis, 2006.

² J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays in the History of Cartography*, Baltimore & London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

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**The Missed Target and the Disappearing Sanity:
Conrad Revisited in *Bommaï*, an Indian Adaptation
of Conrad's *The Secret Agent***

The proposed paper will make an attempt to explore the depiction of terrorism in S. Balachander's 1964 Tamil film, *Bommaï*, an Indian adaptation of Joseph Conrad's widely acclaimed novel on terrorism, *The Secret Agent*. The director Balachander took the material for his film mainly from Alfred Hitchcock's film *Sabotage* (1936) which in its turn is an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel, *The Secret Agent*. Conrad dealt with state-sponsored terrorism and a failed attack on a strategically significant target quite in line with Fanny Van de Stevenson's 1885 novel, *The Dynamiter* as well as some other "dynamite novels" of the early 20th century. Hitchcock in his film *Sabotage* depicts a series of attempted attacks in London and a failed attack at Piccadilly Circus Station resulting in the death of Stevie, the brother-in-law of Mr Verloc, the central character. Hitchcock even retains the names of some of the major characters like Verloc and Stevie. Balachander relocates the issue of terrorism in Indian context and depicts Indian perspectives on terrorism. The terrorist mentalities, tactics, and course of action in Indian context will be dealt with in details in the proposed article. The paper will examine how far the film maker has been truthful to Hitchcock and Conrad in his depiction of terrorism in the movie.

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The affective uncanny: human and non-human resonances
in Conrad's fiction

Borrowing from affect theory the concept of affective resonance, this paper aims to examine the uncanny interplay between the human and the non-human in Conrad's fiction. Defined as "the capacities to act and be acted upon", (M. Gregg & G. J. Siegworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke UP, 2010), affect lies at the core of Conrad's much-quoted formulation of his artistic project in the preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. For the artist's "appeal" to "the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation" to "be effective", "it must be an impression made through the senses". Its aim is "to make you hear, to make you feel -- it is, before all, to make you see."

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad tells us in the 'Author's Note' to 'Youth', he meant to produce "a sinister resonance", "a continued vibration, that (...) would hang in the air and dwell on the ear after the last not had been struck"; which appears to read as a response by anticipation to F. R. Leavis's negative criticism of the role of emotion in Conrad's novella, a mere "emotional insistence on the presence of what he cannot produce". Leavis points here to the presence of an absence, which paradoxically may refer, in lay terms, to a resonance, the after-effect presence of something which has disappeared.

This paper will examine Conrad's use of resonance in connection with his treatment of interactions between the human and the non-human. Ecocritical studies of Conrad's fiction have, comparatively, put greater emphasis on the auditory, resonance being there taken in both its origins in acoustics and the physics of vibration and, in the sense of an attunement, as an affect, "born in in-between-ness and resid[ing] as accumulative *"beside-ness"* (Gregg & Siegworth").

This will lead us to consider two conflicting readings of Conrad's views on the non-human, in between or side by side, seeing in nature either "lofty indifference" (*An Outcast of the Islands*) or an uncanny presence suggesting a continuum knitting together all creation.

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Lord Jim, Laco Adamik
and The Polish Theatre of Television

To understand the powerful influence of the specific Polish institution of Polish TV, called Teatr Telewizji (“The Theatre of Television”) functioning successfully from 1953, we should note the most memorable spectacles produced for that institution: A. Wajda’s (*Noc listopadowa* [The November Night] by Wyspiański, Hamlet, Zbrodnia i kara [Crime and Punishment]), K. Swinarski’s (*Dziady* [Forefathers’ Eve] by Mickiewicz, *Wyzwolenie* [Liberation] by Wyspiański) or J. Jarocki (Witkacy’s *Matka* [Mother], *Life is a Dream*, Gombrowicz’s *Ślub* [The Marriage]). Although Conrad’s text appeared in (the so called) “The Theatre of Television Golden Hundred” only once – with *Spiskowcy* [Plotters] directed by Zygmunt Hübner in 1980 – the writer has enjoyed great popularity among Theatre of Television’s directors throughout all of the years: starting with Roman Sykała’s *Tomorrow* in 1958 and ending with Jan Englert’s *Spiskowcy* [Plotters] in 2017. The list of spectacles consists of 18 artistic projects:

1. Adam Hanuszkiewicz (directing and script), *Amy Foster*, 26 September 1960.
2. Juliusz Burski (directing), Juliusz Burski, Wiesław Wodecki (script), *Typhoon*, 7 June 1968.
3. Juliusz Burski (directing), Juliusz Burski, Wiesław Wodecki (script), *Freya of the Seven Isles*, 8 March 1968.
4. Andrzej Zakrzewski (directing and script), *Me, Axel Heyst* (Ja, Axel Heyst), 3 September 1990.
5. Roman Sykała (directing), Tadeusz Haluch, Adam Kochanowski (adaptation), *Tomorrow*, 25 January 1958.
6. Jerzy Gruza (directing), *Tomorrow*, 16 January 1960 (with translation of Zbigniew Herbert).
7. Aleksander Strokowski (directing), Edward Szuster (adaptation), *Rover*, 15 December 1967.

8. Lidia Zamkow (directing and script), *Lord Jim*, 29 May 1972.
9. Laco Adamik (directing), Michał Komar (adaptation), *Lord Jim*, 6 May 2002.
10. Juliusz Burski (directing), Juliusz Burski, Wiesław Wodecki (script), *The Nigger of the „Narcissus”*, 25 October 1968.
11. Czesław Staszewski (directing), Władysław Wojciechowski (script), *I will never know (Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski) [Nigdy nie będę wiedział (Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski)]*, 10 March 1972.
12. Antoni Bohdziewicz (directing), Anna Demkowska (adaptation), *An Outpost of Progress*, 2 October 1961.
13. Irena Wollen (directing), Elżbieta Morawiec (adaptation), *The Shadow-Line*, 22 March 1976.
14. Zygmunt Hübner (directing and script with Michał Komar), *Under Western Eyes [Spiskowcy]*, 9 February 1987.
15. Jan Englert (directing and script), *Under Western Eyes [Spiskowcy]*, 23 October 2017.
16. Andrzej Zakrzewski (directing and script), *The Secret Agent*, 14 November 1974.
17. Krzysztof Zaleski (directing), Michał Komar (adaptation), *The Secret Agent*, 9 January 2006.
18. Juliusz Burski (directing and script with Wiesław Wodecki), *The Secret Sharer*, 29 December 1967.

The aim of the study is to focus on one specific example: Laco Adamik and Michał Komar's adaptation of *Lord Jim*. To explain why this case seems to be crucial in understanding the phenomenon of "The Theatre of Television", it is worth mentioning that Adamik was the most recognizable name among the names of all directors of that project, having directed the prominent plays of Polish TV with the avantgarde realization techniques: Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisanda* (1977), Musset's *Lorenzaccio* (1978), Polish romantic and neoromantic drama of Konrad Swinarski (*Dziady* 1983, earlier *Wyzwolenie* 1980 of the legendary director were adapted to Polish TV by Adamik). One of his greatest achievement seems to be Ferdinand Brückner's *Elizabeth, Queen of England* produced in 1984. His adaptation of *Lord Jim* (2002) should be compared with his top projects for the television theatre to identify what idiosyncrasies or mannerisms can be traced in Adamik's late attempts to adapt Conrad.

Daniel Vogel
University of Applied Sciences in Raciborz, Poland

**The influence of Conrad's fiction on the generation
of Polish artists touched by the Second World War:
Jan Józef Szczepański and Stanisław Lem**

Despite being deeply influenced by Joseph Conrad and his moral dilemmas, Stanisław Lem, one of the most recognisable modern Polish writers and the author of notable works such as *Solaris* and *Fiasco*, makes very few direct references to the author of *Heart of Darkness* in his fictional works. This may be because of the intellectual relationship he maintained with his closest friend, Jan Józef Szczepański, whom he met in Cracow in the late 1940s. Szczepański was captivated by Conrad's moral code and determination to remain faithful to his ideals. The two friends spent hours discussing various topics, and as Lem was an avid reader of anything with artistic or scientific merit, it is highly probable that he was influenced by Conradian morality, aesthetics and the realities of life at sea, thus becoming an important connection between the two remarkable artists.

Zdzisław Najder wrote of Szczepański: "Ethics goes before metaphysics; more than that – ethics is metaphysics – it replaces metaphysics. Moral law is more important than the laws of nature". Szczepański is linked to Conrad through his attitude to writing and the principle of " 'doing justice to the visible world'." Bearing this in mind, the aim of this paper is to examine how the personality and literary output of Jan Józef Szczepański — a writer, reporter and translator, notably of Conrad's works such as *Nostromo* and *The Shadow Line* — influenced Stanisław Lem's outlook on literature, history and politics in the post-war era.

Sylvia Janina Wojciechowska
Ignatianum University in Cracow, Poland

**Conrad at the University in the 21st Century:
“Amy Foster” and Young Adult Response**

Since the year of its first publication, “Amy Foster” has fascinated the reading public, generating a substantial number of critical and cultural responses, ranging from the readings of its resonances with the Polish culture (Krajka, Brzozowska-Krajka, Skolik), through intertextual inquiries (Chialant, Schaffer), to the examinations of the universal message which the story of Janko Gooral has inspired (Maisonnant, Krajka). A special case in point seems to me the 1997 film adaptation of the short story, *Swept from the Sea*, which, however distant from the original and scholarly contested, is framed as a tale based upon the universal longing for home. This paper focuses upon the favourable reception of “Amy Foster” within the 21st-century young adult circles. It is argued that, symptomatically, nostalgia is a feeling which may be involved in the young adult appreciation of Conrad’s “Amy Foster.” With reference to Wiesław Krajka’s 2024 application to the Polish Ministry of Education regarding the inclusion of “Amy Foster” in the compulsory reading lists in Poland as well as to the practice of teaching “Amy Foster” at the university level, and, finally, to blog posts by young scholar(s), it is argued that a shift in the reception of Joseph Conrad’s prose has recently become noticeable. It is posited that the turn towards tales involved with longing for home is symptomatic of contemporary young people who, faced with the swift changes in both the real and virtual world, are searching for the safety of home. Thus, the feeling of nostalgia seems to have become a decisive factor for motivating their literary and cultural choices.

Kaoru Yamamoto
University of Shiga Prefecture, Japan

**‘strange people and far off countries’:
Conradian Sympathies in Takizawa Seiho’s
The Panther in Ukraina 1950**

Takizawa Seiho (1963–) is known for his manga works set during World War II, particularly focusing on aerial combat and military themes, with the detailed, realistic style. His graphic interpretation of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, part of the 2004 collection *Who Fighter with Heart of Darkness*, brought him international fame, especially after its English-language edition was published in 2006. His imaginative reworking of the Polish-British author’s novella captures the essence of the exploration of human nature, morality, and imperialism, while weaving it into a historical and military narrative. Yet we might consider that the artist, who was from Hokkaido, the northern Japanese island with the territories illegally occupied by Russia, was already prepared for some of Conradian themes, sympathies across distant cultures and peoples, for example, even before his encounter with Conrad’s original novel. It was not the original novel, but rather Francis Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now* (1979), through which Takizawa first discovered Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Interestingly, however, every scene of the film adaptation, he remembers in an interview, unfolded effortlessly in his imagination—now transformed with Japanese figures present in every moment. Takizawa’s earlier work *The Panther in Ukraina* [Japanese for Ukraine] (the original title, *Ukrainian Mixed Brigade*, 1995), a story of a post-war mixed brigade trying to fight their way out of Russian captivity by acquiring a Panther tank, is a case in point. Takizawa incorporates real Ukrainian independence fighters but reimagines the brigade with German and Japanese soldiers from Siberian internment in the background of shifting allegiances after the war.

Takizawa sympathetically depicts the prisoners mostly from minority backgrounds—the identification that might not be unrelated with his anti-Russian sentiment, which is also evident in some of Conrad's stories and essays. By paying particular attention to his *The Panther in Ukraina*, this paper will explore how much the manga artist shares with the Polish-British writer in aestheticism and perspective, among others, sympathies and identification with marginalised communities—'strange people and far off countries' ('Author's Note', *Almayer's Folly*, p. lxi). This paper will suggest in conclusion then that already Conradian elements of Takizawa's earlier work laid the groundwork for the profound themes he is later to grapple with in his unique take on *Heart of Darkness*.

David Jařab
Playwright and screenwriter,
theatre and film director, stage designer,
Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, Czech Republic

Hadí plyn

Hadí plyn (*Snake Gas*, 2023) is a cinematic parable that reflects our anxieties about violence, our search for meaning in love and sexuality, and our willingness—or refusal—to distinguish between refugees and intruders. The film draws inspiration from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The quest for natural gas in forbidden zones, mirroring the confrontation with African refugees seeking a new life in Europe, may at first seem absurd, yet it is deeply rooted in contemporary reality. In Conrad's original tale, a white man ventures into the heart of the dark continent to dominate its people, while simultaneously confronting his own inner darkness. This new interpretation reverses the dynamic: Africa arrives on the white continent, provoking varied responses—fear, hatred, contempt, but also self-awareness.

Amid impenetrable nature, the colonial narrative of sanctimonious cultural expansion clashes with a pragmatic resistance to any penetration by foreign cultures. The journey of Robert Klein into the shadowy recesses of the European soul is intentional, probing our most entrenched prejudices. His character serves as a metaphor for Eastern Europe's need to confront its own frustrations. Within him lies a deeply rooted patriarchy and sense of cultural superiority, yet he is also conscious of the need to change these tendencies.



Hadí plyn (*Snake Gas*, 2023). Reproduced courtesy of David Jařab.



Hadí plyn (*Snake Gas*, 2023). Reproduced courtesy of David Jařab.



Hadí plyn (*Snake Gas*, 2023). Reproduced courtesy of David Jařab.

PROGRAMME

Day 1: 25 September 2025

09:15 – 09:30 **Registration**

09:30 – 09:40 **Welcoming Address** by Representative of Polish Academy of Sciences Scientific Center in Paris

Opening of the Symposium

Véronique Pauly, President of the French Joseph Conrad Society
Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, President of the Polish Joseph Conrad Society

The Resonance of Conrad in Contemporary Literature **Chair: Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech**

09:40 – 09:50 Jan B. Gordon: Havens of Homelessness: People and Money in Conrad's Archipelago Enclaves

09:50 – 10:05 Roundtable discussion

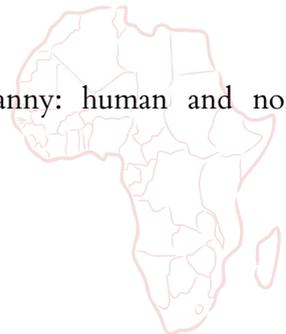
10:05 – 10:15 Robert Hampson: Theft: Abdulrazak Gurnah and Conrad's Postcolonial Resonance

10:15 – 10:30 Roundtable discussion

10:30 – 10:40 Véronique Pauly: The affective uncanny: human and non-human resonances in Conrad's fiction

10:40 – 10:55 Roundtable discussion

10:55 – 11:15 Coffee break



The Resonance of Conrad in Contemporary Culture

Chair: Véronique Pauly

- 11:15 – 11:25 Michel Arouimi: *Conrad in Monica Vitti's Memories*
- 11:25 – 11:40 Roundtable discussion
- 11:40 – 11:50 Daniel Vogel: The influence of Conrad's fiction on the generation of Polish artists touched by the Second World War: Jan Józef Szczepański and Stanisław Lem
- 11:50 – 12:00 Roundtable discussion
- 12:00 – 14:00 Lunch break

Visual Transformations of Conrad's Prose I: Cinema

Chair: Daniel Vogel

- 14:00 – 14:10 Narugopal Mukherjee: The Missed Target and the Disappearing Sanity: Conrad Revisited in *Bomma*, an Indian Adaptation of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*
- 14:10 – 14:25 Roundtable discussion
- 14:25 – 14:35 Simla Dogangun: Enclosed Currents: Authority and Institutional Collapse from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Tolga Karaçelik's *Ivy Simla*
- 14:35 – 14:50 Roundtable discussion
- 14:50 – 15:15 Coffee break
- 15:15 – 15:25 Sylwia J. Wojciechowska: Conrad at the University in the 21st Century: "Amy Foster" and Young Adult Response
- 15:25 – 15:40 Roundtable discussion

Day 2: 26 September 2025

Visual Transformations of Conrad's Prose II: Graphic Novels

Chair: Nathalie Martinière

- 09:30 – 09:40 Kaoru Yamamoto: 'strange people and far off countries':
Conradian Sympathies in Takizawa Seiho's *The Panther in
Ukraine 1950*
- 09:40 – 09:55 Roundtable discussion
- 09:55 – 10:05 Ellen Burton Harrington: Gazing Back: Women in Graphic
Novel Adaptations of *Heart of Darkness* by Anayango and
Mairowitz and by Kuper
- 10:05 – 10:15 Roundtable discussion
- 10:15 – 10:30 Coffe break

Visual Transformations of Conrad's Prose III: Illustrations

Chair: Sylwia J. Wojciechowska

- 10:30 – 10:40 Nathalie Martinière: Mapping *Heart of Darkness*. A Story of Maps
and Colours: J-P. Stassen's illustrations for *Coeur des Ténèbres*
- 10:40 – 10:55 Roundtable discussion
- 10:55 – 11:05 Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech: Drowning in Darkness:
Carnage, Corporeality, and Colonial Legacy in Michaël Matthys'
Kurtz
- 11:05 – 11:20 Roundtable discussion
- 11:20 – 14:00 Lunch break

Visual Transformations of Conrad's Prose IV: Theatre
Chair: Kaoru Yamamoto

- 14:00 – 14:10 Karol Samsel: *Lord Jim*, Laco Adamik and The Polish Theatre of Television
- 14:10 – 14:25 Roundtable discussion
- 14:25 – 14:50 Coffee break

Snake Gas Uncoiled:
A Director's Take on Transforming Conrad
Chair: Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech

- 14:50 – 15:20 David Jařab's talk on *Hadí plyn* (screening some fragments of *Snake Gas*)
- 15:20 – 15:30 Questions
- 15:30 – 17:00 Screening of *Snake Gas*



Graphic design by Zuzanna Łacny



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