M. Pontoppidan

Kurtz and Plotinus: The Gang of Virtue

M. Pontoppidan
Kurtz and Plotinus: The Gang of Virtue

Abstract. The article brings together Plotinian ethics and Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of darkness*, reading the ethical concerns of the latter as an implicit criticism of the Plotinian ethical ideal of relinquishing the human condition in favour of "becoming God". The novella's central character, Kurtz, and his dark fate, may be interpreted as a warning against dangers attached to such an ideal. Another purpose of the article is to show how Conrad, though rejecting belief in an immaterial reality, yet shares a "Platonic temperament"; and that his approach to ethics — like that of Plotinus — is purely virtue ethical (as opposed to deontological or utilitarian). This is atypical for a nineteenth century thinker.
Keywords: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Plotinus, Plato.

You are of the new gang — the gang of virtue.
(Conrad 2000: 30.)

There is even one abandoned creature who says that I am a neo-platonist. What on earth is that?
(Conrad on an unnamed reviewer, in letter 94 to Edward Garnett. Sherry 1997: 225.)

This article brings together Plotinus and the character Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (written in 1898–99 and pub-

© M. Pontoppidan (Москва). germanic@philol.msu.ru. Московский государственный университет им. М.В. Ломоносова.

lished in 1902).[1] The purpose is to apply *in concreto* an existential reading which I have presented of Plotinus' ethics in my Ph.D. thesis *An Ethics of Excarnation: Body, Soul, and Horror in the Enneads*, where the present text is also included as a chapter.

In writing this article, I have been inspired by the way Julia Kristeva clarifies her philosophical points by taking recourse to literature. For instance, in *Powers of Horror* — an essay on the concept of abjection — she analyses Céline's *œuvre* as a manifest of abjection; in *Tales of Love*, texts by Stendhal and Baudelaire are among her literary live specimens. I shall here do the same thing: further illuminate my discussion of the existential elements in Plotinian ethics by reading *Heart of Darkness* up against it — as an ambivalent criticism of a surprisingly similar ethical ideal.

Though Conrad in the above quotation from Sherry 1997 was scornful (or posing as such) of the reviewer who detected a whiff of Neoplatonism in his work, there are several features one might indicate in support of such a statement.[2] Not in the straightforward sense of Conrad having studied Neoplatonist authors and intentionally played with their ideas in his works — not in the sense of direct 'influence' — but in the sense of patterns forming in his texts which may be characterized as Neoplatonic independently of the author's intentions. Below, I go through those of such supportive features as are relevant to my theme; but first, I include the main thread of the *Heart of Darkness* plot to refresh it in the reader's mind.

The plot

It is a narrative with a double frame, almost in the fashion of those Platonic dialogues that insert one or more layers of 'buffer perspectives' between the reader and the events and main characters depicted in the text. The story in *Heart of Darkness* is told to the readers by an anonymous seaman who describes himself as listening, along with four

[1] Conrad 2000: xii.

[2] Nor was the unnamed reviewer the only one to say so; acclaimed Conrad scholar Ian Watt called the author "a Platonist who fell among empiricists" (Watt 2000: 167).

unenthusiastic colleagues, to a monologue by their shipmate, Charlie Marlow, on a quiet, light-filled evening aboard a cruising yawl on the Thames. Marlow recounts his "inconclusive" (Conrad 2000: 8) experiences from another river voyage — into the heart of Africa on duty for an unnamed Company in the colonial ivory trade.

On this journey, Marlow repeatedly hears rumours of the chief of the "Inner Station" (meaning the ivory-collecting station situated deepest in the wilderness), Kurtz, who is described as a "remarkable man" — a man of an unusually admirable character. People speak of him either with adoration or with envy, and Marlow himself begins to long to meet this man. He imagines him primarily as a voice speaking an unimaginable wisdom:

> I had never imagined him as doing […] but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, 'Now I will never see him,' or 'Now I will never shake him by the hand,' but, 'Now I will never hear him.' The man presented himself as a voice […] The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words — the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness. (Conrad 2000: 58.)

The journey itself through the devastation caused by colonization is described through a series of hellish, Dantean images: empty, rotting villages of the indigenous peoples who have fled; men in chains dying in shaded groves after being worked to death; rusting machinery that has been transported there seemingly for no other purpose than to disfigure the landscape and signal dominion. Wanton cruelty and an absence of rational meaning, of consciousness, in the ongoing destruction are Marlow's two primary impressions. Just beyond the borders of the colonial influence he glimpses the land itself, its nature and its people, which impress him as dignified in a way the intruders are not, and containing a power different in kind from that of the colonialists. His descriptions of this power of nature and natural abode have an apophatic character, where darkness and the indefinite are recurrently invoked as metaphors. His clearest statements on the contrast

(colonial-indigenous) reveal that he associates with the colonial project an illusory quality, and experiences the local landscape and the native Africans living in it as "straightforward facts" by contrast:

> The voice of the surf heard now and then was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a brother. It was something natural, that had its reason, that had a meaning. Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows […] They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks — these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were a great comfort to look at. For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts […] (Conrad 2000: 16.)

They have a sense of reality about them, while the colonialists seem like a "vision" or dream:

> When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision. I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clear necktie, and varnished boots […] I shook hands with this miracle, and I learned he was the Company's chief accountant, and that all the bookkeeping was done at this station. (Conrad 2000: 21.)

Conrad here uses his trademark irony to make his point, combining the "vision" with the least spiritual of all activities, that of accounting for material expenditure. Another impression of otherworldly colonialists comes a bit later:

> I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard […] A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all […] By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. (Conrad 2000: 27.)

When he arrives at Kurtz' station, he finds the man to be really "very little more than a voice" (Conrad 2000: 59) — dying from a wasting illness, a thinly skin-clad speaking skeleton. The voice, though, is full of the power Marlow was promised along the way by the people who praised Kurtz:

> The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! a voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper. (Conrad 2000: 75.)

In fact, the natives adore him quite literally as a deity, and he accepts this and willingly takes part in their rituals of an unspecified, but allegedly shocking nature:

> […] certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which — as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times — were offered up to him — do you understand? — to Mr. Kurtz himself. (Conrad 2000: 61.)

Marlow's assignment is to bring Kurtz back to Europe. But Kurtz attempts to escape this fate by crawling into the wilderness to die there. Marlow catches him at it, argues with him and they sail off. Kurtz dies on the journey, his last words being the enigmatic exclamation: "The horror! The horror!".

Marlow brings back to England an eloquent report Kurtz has written on how to treat the natives of the land, and on his own initiative censors it before passing it on to anyone: He removes from it a postscript with the chilling recommendation: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (Conrad 2000: 62.) He also censors Kurtz' last spoken words when visiting his mourning fiancée to give her his personal papers. She, who cherishes the memory of Kurtz as an ideal man, asks for these words (which only Marlow heard) to be repeated, as she wants "something — to — to live with". The seaman answers in anguish: "The last word he pronounced — was your name." (Conrad 2000: 96.)

So he lies to her; or does he?

Here ends the retelling of the plot.

A criticism of a similar ideal?

The horror brought me to Kurtz in the first place. Then it struck me that there was much more to say about Kurtz' philosophy of life in comparison to Plotinian philosophy. In fact, I am going to claim that Conrad's portrayal of Kurtz can be read as, on the one hand, an honest

exploration of the considerable attraction of an ethical ideal similar to the one proposed by Plotinus — the Neoplatonic striving for unification with the idea, and for 'becoming God' — and on the other hand a scathing criticism of the same ideal, from a materialist, and 'human-remaining-human', point of view. What is interesting about Conrad's criticism is precisely his recognition of the power and beauty of the ideal he rejects. Though he criticizes it, he does not exactly give it up! At least Marlow cannot. He speaks about Kurtz in what one may term a Platonically-erotic way, whereby I mean: with a desire analogous to a sexual fascination, a purely spiritual longing of the same strength and insistence. To give an example, the transcending force of the desire to meet Kurtz is shown by contrasting it with Marlow's non-response to the death of humans and other animals participating in an expedition of questionable morals:

> the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver. Long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead. I know nothing as to the fate of the less valuable animals. They, no doubt, like the rest of us, found what they deserved. I did not inquire. I was then rather excited at the prospect of meeting Kurtz very soon. (Conrad 2000: 41.)

Why this contrast? Kurtz is more engaging because he has better ideals — what the envious manager calls "the pestiferous absurdity of his talk," and then proceeds to quote; allegedly Kurtz had once lectured him that: "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a center for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing." (Conrad 2000: 40.)

The men on the Eldorado Expedition — especially the white leaders, but also the black servants — are, in contrast, described with the most condemning words used about humans in the entire book. They are "the less valuable animals" on whose survival or demise Marlow cannot be bothered to check up. Their fault in his eyes is their 'buccaneer' (Conrad 2000: 36) greed and total lack of an idea that 'redeems it' (cf. Marlow's reflections on p. 8). They desire the wrong thing. Their eros is a vulgar one.

A most Platonic eros

Desire affects both women and men who meet Kurtz — and both Africans and Europeans alike. They all adore him, whether in a "vulgar" (ritual, physical) or an "ideal" (intellectual) way.[3] Marlow wants to learn from him, he desires "the inestimable privilege to listen to the gifted Kurtz" (Conrad 2000: 59). Those who do not desire him overtly, do so by proxy through envy (such as the manager and his uncle on p. 38–40). Strikingly, Marlow ends up describing Kurtz' own final vision with the words "the strange commingling of desire and hate" (Conrad 2000: 88). There is something of such a commingling in the Platonic eros; although not so often connected directly with hate, it is by necessity accompanied by an aversion. This is so because the trick of handling eros properly, according to Plato, is to learn to turn away from that which originally woke the desire (say, a beautiful body) — in order to pass on to a purer form of it, with a purer object. (*Smp.* 210b–c; Plotinus agrees with this: "it is error to fall away into sexual intercourse. And the man whose love of the beautiful is pure will be satisfied with beauty alone…" (III.5.1, 37–39.) See also I.6.7, 19 about despising (καταφρονεῖν) what one thought beautiful before.) Once the ascent is completed, it is (in its Plotinian version) supposed to not have an object at all anymore:

> How then can anybody be in beauty without seeing it? If he sees it as something different, he is not yet in beauty, but he is in it most perfectly when he becomes it. If therefore sight is of something external we must not have sight, or only that which is identical with its object. (V.8.11, 19–22.)

When Socrates (referring back to Diotima) in the *Symposium* describes Eros the δαίμων as a child of Poverty (Πενία) and Plenty (Πόρος) (*Smp.* 203b), he paves the way for a long succesion of 'strange commingling' down through European intellectual history, in the form of 'Madonna-whore complexes' and other allied opposites.

[3] With the contrast "vulgar" and "ideal" I am not referring to a contrast explicitly employed by Conrad, but to the Platonic theory of eros which distinguishes between a "vulgar" (sexual) and "heavenly" (spiritual, focused on virtues and wisdom) eros (*Smp.* 180e–185c) — a contrast included in Plotinus' treatise III.5 *On Eros*.

Speaking of which. Another aspect that makes Conrad's criticism relevant to engage with as a reflection of Plotinian-Platonic concerns is that it — like Plotinus' own criticism of the Gnostics in his treatise II.9 — is generated by someone sharing much common ground with that which he condemns. Conrad as a writer shares a Plotinian *temperament*, which is rare among both philosophers and poets, but owes its quality to a fusion of their gifts. I shall return to the question of temperament later, but before that, there is more to say about the presence of a most Platonic eros in *Heart of Darkness*.

Apart from the somewhat schematic, general likeness mentioned above (the novella's recurrent theme of a spiritual, obsessive desire gaining its momentum from a 'co-operative' interplay of attraction and rejection),[4] the story also contains a far more specific portrayal of a model Platonic relationship between Kurtz and one of the other characters. A young Russian whom Marlow meets at Kurtz' station, has become a "disciple" (Conrad 2000: 73) of the latter in a fashion which fits

[4] Marlow even at one point makes what Kristeva would read (and I would agree) as a crystal clear description of the state of abjection. He projects it into the situation of an Ancient Roman arriving to administer the province of Britannia, but is, of course, drawing upon his own African experience:

> There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination — you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate. (Conrad 2000: 7.)

The irredeemable lack of a clear object status of the abject makes it impossible to gain a proper insight into 'what it is'. There is no "initiation"; you cannot become wise about it, because it neither is nor is not anything in the ordinary sense. It erases the borders of the mind, grows over them like a jungle eating its way back into a deserted city, making its fragile buildings crumble one by one.

The act of bringing together "surrender" and "hate" in one move also mirrors the ambivalence of the Platonic eros — in the echo of its effort, though here relinquished, to turn away from that which attracts. This masochistic desire is not primarily erotic, however, but has more of the death drive in it (if we care to speak Freudian at all).

Note how Marlow matter-of-factly supposes this drive to be universal or at least common: "The fascination of the abomination — you know." And no one in his audience protests. As I write elsewhere, *Heart of Darkness* is not a tale about the repression of drives.

in perfectly with the Socratic ideal of such arrangements as we know it from the *Symposium*.

This Russian is described, feature for feature (though not with the word itself), as an ἐρώμενος. He is young, naive, boyish, beardless, his "little blue eyes" are "perfectly round" (like a child's), and he has a wide open, unfinished mind for an ἐραστής to mould.[5] His own description of what Kurtz has done for him is that "this man has enlarged my mind." (Conrad 2000: 67.)

Kurtz has recited to him his own poetry (Conrad 2000: 79), just like it was the custom for the ἐρασταί to do at symposia in Plato's day:

> Lover and beloved would recline together on the same couch, with the lover singing σκολιά, or reciting poetry to his beloved […] The symposium was a place where […] virtue was supposedly reinforced and passed on to the young, a place where men were both displayed and made. (Sheffield 2006: 5).

The Russian youth even specifies that Kurtz, on a night when they camped together in the forest and stayed awake till morning in exalted conversation, talked to him "of love too." He then hastily adds: "It isn't what you think […] It was in general. He made me see things — things." (Conrad 2000: 69).

In other words, it is emphasised that it was not a sexual or personal love, but an abstract, spiritual exploration on Kurtz' part, nevertheless performed in the intimate society of this ephebe. Please do not misread me: I am not implying that Kurtz[6] should be interpreted as a repressed homosexual, and that this is supposed to be the "explanation" of his isolation outside his own culture, and the spiritual crisis he weathers

[5] "A beardless, boyish face, very fair, no feature to speak of, nose peeling, little blue eyes, smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open countenance like sunshine and shadow on a wind-swept plain." (Conrad 2000: 65.) The open and unfinished, childish state of this young man's soul is over-abundantly emphasised: "no feature to speak of" (all imprintable like wax), expressions and emotions ever-changing (the opposite character of the tranquil sage whom nothing can budge emotionally); add to this his grotesque attire which reminds Marlow of a harlequin — entertainment for the young of heart. (Conrad 2000: 64.)

[6] Or Plotinus for that matter (cf. Porpyry's biography *Life of Plotinus*, § 15).

in the wilderness. One might perhaps follow this lead further and do something with it; but it is not my intention here. My point is a different one, and also I think the very atmosphere of the story bespeaks a conflict different from sexual repression. If repression is involved at all, it is rather a religious or moral repression.

No, rather I read this relation between Kurtz and the Russian as a genuinely Platonic relationship: Kurtz is a sincere ascetic (even in his cannibalism), an excarnation devotee just like Plotinus. And his ἔρως, his desire, is not for sex or relationality, but for liberation, salvation from the horror of being a human being — a *soulbody* we might say to accentuate the focus of the worry in question. As Plotinus expressed his final goal: "Our concern is not […] to be out of sin, but to be god." (I.2.6).

What unites Kurtz and the youth is first and last a common, uncompromising sincerity in their act of isolating themselves from the rest of humanity, and an attempt to rise above common human limitations, not least the limitations of the body.

The Russian's story as summed up by Marlow is one of having

> run away from school, had gone to sea in a Russian ship; ran away again […] wandering about that river for nearly two years alone, cut off from everybody and everything […] The glamour of youth enveloped his parti-coloured rags, his destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings. (Conrad 2000: 68.)

As for Kurtz, his parallel isolation from humanity is demonstrated most strongly when Marlow first arrives at the station, and standing beside the young "disciple" whose praise of the "idol" resounds in his ears all the while, discovers through his binoculars (i.e. seeing *from a distance*) that Kurtz' house is surrounded by a row of decapitated and impaled human heads. Looking at them with his own eyes from afar, Marlow had taken them for ornamental wooden knobs on a fence, and falls back startled when he sees them close-up:

> These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing — food for thought and also for the vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky […] They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the

> stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way. (Conrad 2000: 71–72.)

The detail that Kurtz has turned all of the dead faces but one inwards, towards himself, is noteworthy. The most human of needs is that of being seen by others, being mirrored. Kurtz may be subconsciously compensating for his extreme isolation with the perverse setting up of this merry 'company' around him. But to me, the heads without bodies signal more than anything the excarnational character of Kurtz' original ideal, the one with which he left Europe, and which here in his spiritual solitude has realized itself in ways he had never dreamt of (cf. Marlow's comment on p. 72).

According to Conrad, Kurtz actually sort of succeeds in becoming a soul that stands (or hangs) alone. Marlow registers this when he brings him back from the escape attempt in the night, and argues with him: "Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man." (Conrad 2000: 83.) And —

> I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers,[7] to invoke him — himself — his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air. (Conrad 2000: 82.)

Kurtz is as if floating above ground, or better said, outside space (and makes Marlow feel that he, by being in his proximity, is also suddenly suspended). He is not oriented towards anything in three-dimensional space. Like Plotinus says of the soul,

> we should not look for a place in which to put it [= the reasoning part of the soul], but make it exist outside all place. For this is how it is by itself and outside and immaterial, when it is alone and retains nothing from the nature of the body. (V.1.10.)

[7] The word did not in Conrad's time as a rule signal aggression or contempt, but was still in use as a neutral term for black people, especially in Britain. (From Latin *niger* 'black'.)

Similarly, Kurtz is now not in any particular place rather than another. He is not 'confined'.

But since Conrad is not a Platonist by belief, but only by temperament, he does not condone the effort, but has Marlow curse when he sees it threatening to succeed ("confound the man!"). *He*, the seaman of the elements, does not side with the claim that this state is more *real* than his own firmer contact with the earth. He repeatedly describes Kurtz in terms such as "that Shadow — this wandering and tormented thing" (Conrad 2000: 82), "that apparition" (p. 74), "the shade" (p. 61), "[t]his initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere" (ibid.), "that atrocious phantom" (p. 74), and, as mentioned above "very little more than a voice" (p. 59). Marlow also finds it humiliating to depend for his bodily survival in a concrete situation on this ghostly adept of abstraction. He complains to the Russian, with a sarcastic reference back to the latter's praise of Kurtz' allegedly "splendid monologues on [...] love, justice, the conduct of life"[8] (ibid. 73):

> 'Let us hope that the man who can talk so well of love in general will find some particular reason to spare us this time,' I said. I resented bitterly the absurd danger of our situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonouring necessity. (Conrad 2000: 74.)

Nevertheless, exactly such an 'ascent', a rising above ground level through the cultivation of the soul — "enlarging the mind" as the Russian (who is — what else? — the son of an arch-priest) would have it — is what Platonic love, the desire for eternal beauty, aims for. Kurtz is, to the letter, following Platonic recommendations for ethical striving; even his "unspeakable rites" have their counterparts in the symposia of old, designed to be —

[8] Note how much this sounds like a reference to Platonic dialogues — *The Symposium*, *Phaedrus* (on love), *The Republic* (on justice). As for "the conduct of life", Socrates (the historical one, not merely the Platonic literary Socrates) is traditionally credited with the invention of making ethics a main philosophical preoccupation, with his novel approach "virtue is knowledge (φρόνησις)" (see, e.g., *Men.* 89a).

> not just the place for the satisfaction of every desire — for food, drink, sex […] but also a place where the men and young boys who were traditionally present would learn how to regulate their desires in the appropriate manner. The heady mix of drink, beautiful young boys, flute girls and music was seen as a productive testing ground for the development of virtue, since it aroused the very desires that could threaten the social order and provided an appropriate context for their regulation. In Greek literature ἔρως was, at best, perceived as an ambiguous force […]" (Sheffield 2006: 5).

A step further along that path in the Ancient world, the Dionysian rituals were found, which, like (presumably) the tribal rites Kurtz participates in, included cannibalism (at least in the original myth they reenacted) and bloody sacrifice (the tearing apart of a live animal with hands and teeth). It should not be forgotten that the same Ancient Hellenic communities that cultivated rationalism with as honest a devotion as that of the cultural elite of the modern British empire, simultaneously went out and performed such sacrificial activities on certain nights… There is indeed nothing new under the sun.

Conrad even uses the word "ascendancy" to describe Kurtz' position with regard to the local tribes:

> His ascendency was extraordinary. The camps of these people surrounded the place, and the chiefs came every day to see him. They would crawl… (Conrad 2000: 72.)

But, as the dreadful ending to Kurtz' story indicates, with its horror and the lie with which Marlow glosses it over, Conrad does not share with Plato or Plotinus the hope that this road will lead to εὐδαιμονία (well-being).

But what is it, then, that Conrad does with his story? Does he only state his disbelief in a method? Does he simply demonstrate to us that what Kurtz attempts (to attain divine perfection) does not work, but instead turns man into a beast? I think not. Instead, the story may be read as saying that the method actually *does* work — and that therein lies its horror. Conrad's own genuinely Platonic temperament makes him sensitive to such a possibility, even though he did not believe in a supernatural reality behind the sensible one.

Temperament

Now, to return to my statement that Conrad possesses a Platonic "temperament". What is that supposed to mean? First of all, Conrad and Plotinus share a peculiar 'double vision'[9] — that of a poet on the one hand (a capacity for intuitive sympathy, including a sense of the beauty of images bordering on the mystical) and an unusually detached and impartial observer on the other (resulting in an 'impressionist' view on the events or ideas described, and a marked severity of style).

Here are a few examples of each.

The poet:

> knowledge is a kind of longing for the absent, and like the discovery made by a seeker. (Plotinus V.3.10.)
> …as the rays of the sun light up a dark cloud, and make it shine and give it a golden look, so soul entering into the body of heaven[10] gives it life and gives it immortality and wakes what lies inert. (Plotinus V.1.2.)
> He sealed the utterance with that smile of his, as though it had been a door opening into a darkness he had in his keeping. You fancied you had seen things — but the seal was on. (Conrad 2000: 26.)

The detached observer:

> If his relatives are captured in war, "his daughters-in-law and daughters dragged off" — well, suppose he had died without seeing anything of the sort; would he then leave the world in the belief that it was impossible for his relatives to fall into such misfortune? If so, he would be a fool […] Anyhow, many people will do better by becoming war-slaves; and it is in their own power to depart if they find the burden heavy. (Plotinus I.4.7.)

[9] Several critics have used in their reflections on Conrad the expression "double vision" (such as Watt 2007 [1978]: 73), or distinguished between his 'nearer' and 'further' vision (E.M. Forster in Conrad 2000: xxxv), referring to different aspects of his tendency to provide the reader with unmanageable contrasts and obscure revelation. I am not referring to any of these individual uses in particular, but using the expression in my own way as defined below.

[10] The context is that of explaining how the whole universe according to Plotinus is given shape and enlivened by soul. The visible heaven with its heavenly bodies are suffused with soul, and this is how the stars and planets move and shine.

> He blew the candle out suddenly, and we went outside. The moon had risen. Black figures strolled about listlessly, pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing; steam ascended in the moonlight, the beaten nigger groaned somewhere. (Conrad 2000: 30.)

Moreover, Conrad himself has voiced an ambition to be such an observer in his writing; as listed by Warodell, the author's own words for the style he desired — the language he consciously (or officially) aimed at — are "sober", "impartial", "detached", "serious", "faithful" and — "manly". (Dudek 2011: 58; this as set forth in Conrad's *Notes on Life and Letters*, 1926.) One wonders if the last word may have been chosen (consciously or subconsciously) because it is the original literal meaning of another word Conrad perhaps would have liked to use here, but could not in good taste apply to himself — "virtuous"?

Virtue

Be that as it may, the question of virtue — being a virtuous person — is certainly at the fore in *Heart of Darkness*. The story's approach to ethics is, on the whole, purely virtue ethical. Which is surprising, since Western moral philosophy at the time the novella was written had for more than a century quite abandoned this approach to ethics in favour of the trends of (Kantian) deontology on the one hand, and utilitarianism on the other (departing from Bentham and Mill). Conrad, however, is dismissive of such modern approaches to good and evil — he waves aside any references to principles,[11] or to utility, with a few sarcastic remarks, and then concentrates wholly on the question of personal character, and on classical virtues such as justice, truth, beauty, and courage. Around these two — character and virtue — are each of the tale's dilemmas and moral conflicts constructed.

[11] "Let the fool gape and shudder — the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must […] meet that truth with his own true stuff — with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags — rags that would fly off at the first good shake." (Conrad 2000: 44.)

Plotinus also emphasises that what the (wise) person knows is not something that can be captured in principles or logical deductions, but must be rooted in a deeper identity with what is known (a point elaborately treated in treatise V.8.4–5).

It seems as if Marlow, when he at the beginning of the text takes his audience back to the age when ancient Romans first explored the then-dark (savage) England, took his author with him, and left his (Conrad's) mind there, lodged in the past. So that for the rest of the tale, each of the characters as a matter of course react and reflect as if they were raised on virtue ethics like the educated people of Late Antiquity. Not that they react uniformly, on the contrary, each has his unique approach, but they all seem to take for granted that character traits (rather than consequences of actions, or universal principles) are what matter when an ethically relevant situation arises. In several ways, Marlow's story seems to belong more to the Ancient world, the beginning of Western civilisation, than to Modern Europe. Not so much because it takes place among tribal societies in Central Africa, but because of the virtue oriented way the European main characters of the story respond to their surroundings.[12] Let us look some more into that.

An important passage directly points to the question of virtue as salient. It is part of a conversation between Marlow and a young, ambitious agent at the Central Station. Marlow asks about Kurtz:

> 'Tell me, pray,' said I, 'who is this Mr. Kurtz?'
> […] 'He is a prodigy […] He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else. We want,' he began to declaim suddenly, 'for the guidance of the cause entrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose.'
> 'Who says that?' I asked. 'Lots of them,' he replied. 'Some even write that; and so *he* comes here, a special being, as you ought to know […] You are of the new gang — the gang of virtue.' (Conrad 2000: 30.)

Although the agent personally distances himself from the demand for virtue (he is for his own part more interested in gaining influence

[12] By "virtue oriented" I am not implying that they are more virtuous. I am referring to how they make ethical assesments of events around them — how their scale is constructed, not how they themselves score on it. Most of them, incidentally, score very badly, as Conrad was a pessimist about human nature, and besides that saw colonialism as a context which tried people's personal worth (too) hard.

Joseph Anthony wrote of Conrad: "He was a born irreconcilable, looking at the world through standards of absolute honor, faith and loyalty, and therefore finding it bad." (Anthony 1927: 633.)

of a not so moral kind), he voices it as a general need, a common understanding of colonization as character building, the worldwide distribution of virtues. This agent believes that Marlow, like Kurtz, has 'high connections' and a special insight. He is not all wrong, either. In a spiritual sense, Marlow is 'connected'. The agent's only mistake is that he thinks the insights are of the kind that bring worldly power. But this form of power Marlow himself sees as only an illusion. The agent in question he characterises as follows:

> I let him run on, this *papier-mâché* Mephistopheles, and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe. (Conrad 2000: 31.)

Plotinus would have easily agreed to such a description of a person who had no sense of inner realities. He speaks in the treatise I.6 of the 'crust' on the soul, that part of us which is not really of us and not truly real, but which can be washed off — by practising virtue. It is astonishing how the agent himself voices the very same need: "We want […] for the guidance […] higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose."

In other words, he is voicing a need for a philosophical-spiritual method that makes possible contact with "higher intelligence" — a phrase not unlike definitions of the Plotinian νοῦς — and unification ("wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose").

Had Conrad been studying Plotinus diligently, and wished to employ his vision in his story, he could not have captured the essentials much better than in these few words, whose content runs through all of the narrative as a common expectation and longing of both Marlow and most of the other characters — even those who consciously oppose the sentiment.

Safety?

The book is, as I noted before, an erotic book in the strictly Platonic sense. Meaning that the characters do not long for bodily gratification — neither food nor sex occupy them much, if at all (and it is not simply because the Victorians did not write of such desires, for they

did often enough) — but they long for spiritual fulfillment, a purpose, ideals; they seek moral beauty. Up against this longing, as its opposite, is set only greed — the desire for ivory and the power that wealth brings. However, this desire motivating the agents and 'pilgrims' (so named ironically by Marlow, as they are in fact adventurers seeking personal fortune) — and Kurtz' efficiency in gathering the desired ivory in unusually large quantities for the Company (his "old mud shanty" is "bursting with it", Conrad 2000: 59) — seems to Marlow weak and ghostly, even absurd. He himself longs only for reality, not power, and he senses this reality in the wilderness. During the conversation with the agent who demands guidance, he reflects at length:

> The smell of mud, of primeval mud, by Jove![13] was in my nostrils, the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes; there were shiny patches on the black creek. The moon had spread over everything a thin layer of silver — […] upon the wall of matted vegetation standing higher than the wall of a temple, over the great river I could see through a somber gap glittering, glittering, as it flowed broadly by without a murmur. All this was great, expectant, mute, while the man jabbered about himself. I wondered whether the stillness on the face of the immensity looking at us two were meant as an appeal or as a menace. What were we who had strayed in here? Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us? I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well. What was in there? I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had heard Mr. Kurtz was in there. I had heard enough about it too — God knows! Yet somehow it didn't bring any image with it — no more than if I had been told an angel or a fiend was in there. (Conrad 2000: 31–32.)

This is typical Conradian visionary writing. A vivid sense of the mystery of reality, experienced through contact with the natural world.

[13] No word in Conrad's writing is put there casually. It is probably on purpose that Marlow uses an expression that, though seemingly innocent in its conventionality, read literally is an invocation of Jupiter. The whole passage is distinctly Pagan (the moon, the vegetation that looks like "the wall of a temple", not a church, the inscrutable or ambivalent attitude of the divine presence), and reminds us of the Ancient Romans Marlow invoked at the beginning of his monologue — of whom he said also: "They were men enough to face the darkness." (Conrad 2000: 7.)

Conrad only differs from Plotinus in not concluding that there are literally angels out (or in) there — but they (Conrad and Plotinus) feel the same way about the universe, they respond to it as to one huge living thing that calls for an apophatic approach. Conrad's description of the "somber gap", the place that is like "the wall of a temple", that is, a holy place where divinities linger, includes the experience that it is "mute", "dumb", and Marlow in his response to it approaches a similar condition; he cannot really grasp what he experiences: "somehow it didn't bring any image with it"; "how confoundedly big"… In other places, he speaks more directly of the wilderness as unfathomable (such as on p. 69 or p. 71). Conrad experienced existence as such as ungraspable. He responded to the world with wonder — and horror. Like Plotinus and other Platonists, he also observed that most people in their daily lives ignore this "face of the immensity looking at us", of which it is hard to say whether it holds "an appeal or […] menace".

Plotinus, too, was ambivalent about the relation between individual human beings and the All. On the one hand, the One, the origin of everything, is equalled with the Good. On the other hand, Plotinus makes clear that it is not concerned with the good of the individual, but of the whole. His image of the poor tortoise being trampled by oblivious dancers is one that Conrad would have applauded. That was just how he saw the universe too.

Plotinus writes:

> But if any of the parts of the universe is moved according to its [= the Soul of the All] nature, the parts with whose nature the movement is not in accord suffer, but those which are moved go on well, as parts of the whole; but the others are destroyed because they are not able to endure the order of the whole; as if when a great company of dancers was moving in order a tortoise was caught in the middle of its advance and trampled because it was not able to get out of the way of the ordered movements of the dancers […] (II.9.7, 33–40.)

Plotinus' primary point with this example is to argue that as a whole, the universe is always in harmony. An individual has no right to complain if he happens to be in its path and cannot get out of the way fast enough. He should instead focus on the power and beauty of

the dance and be happy that it never goes out of its way. This makes it trustworthy. Indeed, Plotinus writes in III.4.4, 8: "[…] the universe lies in safety."

As it well may, for he adds: "Plato says that *it has no sight* […] *nor ears nor nostrils either, obviously, nor tongue*." (III.4.4, 9–10.) The All-Soul has nothing to fear; for it is only those with senses who suffer, and only the animals who die. Including of course the two-legged, featherless animals we label as human; but according to Plotinus' definition, "the human being itself" (IV.7.1, 22, my translation) is the soul alone — not the perishable animal. This is how he attempts to make us philosophically safe. This is why he writes that we need not fear.

And yet, both of the two men felt deeply the horror of the individual; otherwise, they would not have set out to combat it so intensely. Plotinus' project only makes sense as an answer to the human question put by such a horror. He would not reassure us thus if he were not keenly aware that we *are* afraid in this universe; afraid of the dancers' feet.

Solitude

The theme of solitude, which is central to both Plotinus and Conrad, may hold its attraction for both of them through their experience of this fear — which they both feel is unworthy, but which must be owned up to and then remedied. And only by exposing oneself to the ultimate solitude can one acquire the needed strength — if at all:

> how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude — utter solitude without a policeman — by the way of silence, utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbor can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness. (Conrad 2000: 60.)

Plotinus would have approved of these words by Marlow. The description points to not only the fundamental contrast, but also the vital importance, of solitude as opposed to the illusions and seductions presented to the individual soul by the collective — the 'intended' (by

which I am not here referring to Kurtz' fiancée alone — though she certainly represents this collective set of expectations — but to what others intend Kurtz to be, and to achieve). This indication of the potential for self-sufficiency of the isolated individual, no doubt, is one of the reasons that Conrad was identified as a Neoplatonist by that "one abandoned creature" of a reviewer.

This is one of the insights that unite Plotinus and Conrad in their approach to ethics: their emphasis on the vital importance of solitude and self-reliance in the cultivation of a proper ethics, the development of personal character. What divides them is that Conrad moves on to be suspicious not only of the collective,[14] but also of the faithfulness of the individual itself. It is not a given that an individual has won his great struggle against his condition merely if he succeeds in keeping faithful to something — an idea, I presume — within himself. Because the very ideals themselves may, according to Conrad, turn on us and devour us.

[14] His misgivings about any collective's ability to bring about any form of ethical improvement are clearly voiced in a letter to Bertrand Russell from the 23rd of October 1922. Here, he criticizes Russell's suggestion in the book *The Problem of China*, Allen & Unwin, Sept. 1922, that the "genuinely progressive people throughout the country" should form "a strongly disciplined society, arriving at collective decisions and enforcing support of those decisions upon all its members". (Russell 1922: 202; see Conrad 2005: 544.)

Conrad owns himself terrified by such a suggestion and responds:

> There is not enough honour, virtue and selflessness *in the world* to make any such council other than the greatest danger to every kind of moral, mental and political independence. It would become a centre of delation, intrigue and jealousy of the most debased kind. No freedom of thought, no peace of heart, no genius, no virtue, no individuality trying to raise its head above the subservient mass, would be safe from the domination of such a council and the unavoidable demoralisation of the instruments of its power. For, I must suppose that you mean it to have power and to have agents to exercise that power — or else it would become as little substantial as if composed of angels of whom ten thousand can sit on the point of a needle. But I wouldn't trust a society of that kind even if composed of angels… More! I would not, my dear friend […] trust that society if Bertrand Russell himself were, after 40 days of meditation and fasting, to undertake the selection of the members. (Conrad 2005: 544–45.)

Therefore, Conrad has not the hope of salvation that Plotinus does. He is ambiguous about the purity Marlow protects by lying about Kurtz: the purity of his ideal, tended by the Intended like an idol in a shrine. Like a Vestal virgin sworn to a life of fleshless service, this frigid (though feeling) woman tends the ever-burning flame of Kurtz' ideal destiny.

Kurtz himself chose differently. He fled from the Intended (the woman intended for him, and the entire world order she represented) and painted in his isolation instead a portrait of Justice (Conrad 2000: 29–30). Modelled on the Intended, no doubt, and a threat to his humanity in itself, since it is another superhuman ideal; but still, perhaps, one step closer to something human than the ideal from which he ran. A weak and partly failed attempt, perhaps, at a re-descent into humanity as opposed to the soaring ascent towards divinity. (This is why I, at the end of the plot summary ask whether Marlow has lied to the Intended or not. Has he in fact subtly expressed about her: "Thy name is horror!"?) Marlow seems to sense something of that kind, to judge from the respect with which he speaks of Kurtz' choice,[15] and the pangs of conscience he feels by lying about him.

Problem: How to avoid 'kurtzification'

Plotinus would, on his part, have judged Kurtz' choice on his deathbed (to focus on the horror and thereby lament the fate of the human being — the trampled tortoise, the victim of the dance of gods) as a defeat, a fall into illusion and non-being, a capitulation before matter and the passion leading deeper into it. Insisting upon "the horror!" would to him be to lead the energy of the soul into a downwards direction, linking one's mind with that which is its inferior in a Platonist's eyes: passions, drives, ultimately fear.

"The horror!"

The main point to Plotinus — the recommendation he gives his students — is to not make that move. (See treatise I.8.4–5, where he warns

[15] "It was an affirmation, a moral victory". (Conrad 2000: 88.)

against the danger of turning the soul's attention to matter and darkness. This will pollute the soul and drag it down towards Hades.)

That move, which in Conrad's tale is depicted (Conrad 2000: 88) as sounding "a vibrating note of revolt" (being an act of noble defiance on Kurtz' part), to Plotinus would testify to the weakness of identifying with the individual perspective that only comes to be when the one light of Intellect is split into the many individual rays of the one Soul.

It is my hope that both the similarities between Conrad's and Plotinus' interpretations of the human condition, and the places where their ways part, have helped to make clearer some nuances in Plotinus' ethical and spiritual striving. And that Conrad's objection to the ideal of "becoming God" highlights a real problem in Neoplatonic virtue ethics which I think its proponents need to solve: how to avoid being 'kurtzified' by cultivating such an ethics.

Neoplatonism seems to hold a special attraction for political extremists even today. In Russia, for instance, the self-proclaimed fascist Alexander Dugin is presently heading a "Russian School of Neoplatonism" in Moscow, emphasising the "political Platonism" and voicing the ambition of creating an actual "Platonopolis"[16] (at one point this was a personal ambition of Plotinus too).

And looking at the description of the Plotinian σπουδαῖος in treatise I.4.8, I find it worrying that it fits the character of Robespierre as if drawn from life:[17]

> One must understand that things do not look to the good man (τῷ σπουδαίῳ) as they look to others; none of his experiences penetrate to the inner self, griefs no more than any of the others. And when the pains concern others? [To sympathise with them] would be a weakness in our soul […] If anyone says that it is our nature to feel pain at the misfortunes of our own people, he should know that this does not apply to everybody, and that it is the business of virtue to raise ordinary nature to a higher level, something better than most people are capable of; and it is better not to give in to what ordinary nature normally finds terrible. (I.4.8. Insertion in brackets by Armstrong.)

[16] See URL: http://www.platonizm.ru/.

[17] My thanks to Karsten Fledelius for suggesting the Robespierre comparison.

I am not saying that Plotinus is here directly advocating that people go out and erect scaffolds for beheadings — but I fail to see how his idea of "the business of virtue" puts any brakes on a Robespierre or Kurtz. On the contrary, the reasoning of this passage supports if not their beheadings directly then at least the psychopathic attitude that make such deeds endurable to commit. Robespierre was nicknamed "the incorruptible" and thought to be a very virtuous man. As he states in his speech on virtue and terror:

> Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue […] (Halsall 1997.)

This speech could in principle have been the model for Kurtz' "pamphlet".

The Apocalypse-*Kurtz*

To look a bit more into this aspect, I would like to conclude with a reflection on the most famous adaptation of Conrad's novella, Francis Ford Coppola's highly praised 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*, which relocates the story to the US/Vietnam war and has the 20th century 'Marlow', Captain Benjamin Willard, sent out on a mission to *kill* Kurtz (now a renegade colonel, Walter E. Kurtz). It is (as is clear from this detail alone) on the face of it a much less Platonic story. Kurtz even has Willard tortured when he catches him. In other words, the danger to the characters tends to be reduced to a merely mortal one.[18] But not en-

[18] The original Marlow found that to be a relief when it happened:

> I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was — how shall I define it? — the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly. This lasted of course the merest fraction of a second, and then the usual sense of commonplace, deadly danger, the possibility of a sudden onslaught and massacre, or something of the kind, which I saw impending, was positively welcome and composing. It pacified me, in fact […] (Conrad 2000: 80.)

Fear of death is a picnic compared to the state of abjection, which is here perfectly

tirely so. Near the end, Willard muses, while he pulls himself together to kill Kurtz:

> If the generals back in Nha Trang could see what I saw, would they still want me to kill him? More than ever, probably. And what would his people back home want if they ever learned just how far from them he'd really gone? *He broke from them. And then he broke from himself.* I'd never seen a man so broken up and ripped apart. (Coppola 2001: 177:49–178:18.)

The process of radical separation which Kurtz has gone through is described as an anomaly, an unhealthy thing, insofar as the words "broken" and "ripped" seem to indicate a damage. But on the other hand, it is worth noting that Willard is driven to ask himself the question whether the killing is justified any longer after seeing "what I saw". Through becoming personally acquainted with Kurtz — through exposure to his character — Willard has had a vision. The way Kurtz is filmed, as a silhouette of light, his hairless skull golden in the dark, isolated like a heavenly body in space immensely far above all human concerns, elevates him, too — it signals transfiguration. We should in our context note that Kurtz has performed a radical separation of himself — a part of him has risen above the rest, and above other humans, his own family included. Let us compare with these famed words by Plotinus:

> This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men, deliverance from the things of this world, a life which takes no delight in the things of this world, escape in solitude to the solitary. (VI. 9.11, 49–50.)

What Willard observes with some unease and some questioning, is by Plotinus praised as a necessary part of the ascent. Family relations and loyalties are to be shed (cf. p. 12) like a snake's skin or an insect's cocoon during the process of ascent, of spiritual transformation. Kurtz is going through that process — and so is Willard, just by having been put into contact with him and witnessing his 'shedding'. Willy-nilly, he

---

defined as a "moral shock", "intolerable to thought and odious to the soul"; and, of course, "unconnected with any shape", "pure abstract terror".

becomes a disciple, an initiate into the mysteries at the heart of darkness.

In other words: In spite of his cruelty, Kurtz is being staged as a sage, and his words, though terrible, are given a ring, if not of truth, then of some form of 'superior' insight, whether into good or evil or both. What he says to Willard is:

> I've seen the horrors — horrors that you have seen [...] It's impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means. (Coppola 2001: 178:19–21 and 178:43–179:06.)

This ominous comment might have found favour with both of our two real-life mystics, Plotinus and Conrad. *Apocalypse*-Kurtz seems to say that men will go to staggering lengths to avoid staring the horror straight in the face — even so far as to wage war on another people, bathe them in napalm and Agent Orange, or, on the part of the Viet Cong, hack the arms of their own children rather than have them receive alms (in the form of vaccinations) from the enemy.[19] Exactly this insight into the dangers of avoiding the inner confrontation, refusing to follow the divine advice: 'Know thyself and thine own horror' is one of the main insights that lend the works of both Plotinus and Conrad their impact. What I call their honesty in the face of horror.

The point that as long as man will not face his own horror squarely, he will be likely to inflict it tenfold on others, is a strong one. Plotinus and Conrad alike warn us to have the courage to turn inwards — but disagree about the method to best master the horror. While Plotinus advises us to seek the inner light exclusively, Conrad emphasises the indispensability of also turning towards the darkness. Otherwise, 'kurtzification' might result.

Marlow was originally motivated to leave for Africa when he in a shop in Fleet Street saw a map of the continent, where a certain river

[19] This tale is told by Kurtz to Willard as part of his personal experience on the spot; and, sad to say, this incident allegedly did happen during the war. (Cowie 1994: 120.) Note also that the act is purgative in its intent: The enemy's injections are apparently perceived as contaminations of the children, making them abject in the eyes of the Viet Cong.

impressed him as the image of "an immense snake uncoiled" (Conrad 2000: 9), hypnotizing and fascinating him. He felt that he would have to follow it and let himself be swallowed by it. His succumbing to this spell was perhaps, though, not so much a weakness (though he afterwards came to lament it) as an act of courage: The agent who said to him: "You are of the gang of virtue" may have been right after all.

References

Plato — Plato. The Symposium / Ed. by M.C. Howatson and Frisbee C.C. Sheffield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Plotinus — Plotinus / Translated by A.H. Armstrong. Vols. 1–7. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1966–2006. [Vol. 1 (1989): Porphyry's Life of Plotinus. Ennead I. Vol. 2 (1966): Ennead II. Vol. 3 (2006): Ennead III. Vol. 4 (1984): Ennead IV. Vol. 5 (1984): Ennead V. Vol. 6 (1988): Ennead VI.1–5. Vol. 7 (1988): Ennead VI.6–9.]

Anthony 1927 — *Anthony, Joseph.* Review of *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, by Gerard Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad* // The Century Magazine. September 1927. P. 633.

Breitenberger 2007 — *Breitenberger, Barbara.* Aphrodite and Eros. The Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult. New York and Abingdon: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007.

Conrad 2000 — *Conrad, Joseph.* Heart of Darkness and Selections from the Congo Diary. Westminster, MD: Modern Library, 2000.

Conrad 2005 — *Conrad, Joseph.* The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 7: 1920–1922 // Ed. by Laurence Davies and J.H. Stape. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Coppola 2001 — *Coppola, Francis Ford.* Apocalypse Now Redux. USA: Miramax Films (2001).

Cowie 1994 — *Cowie, Peter.* Coppola: A Biography. N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1994.

Kristeva 1982 — *Kristeva, Julia.* Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. New York: Columbia University Press. 1982.

Kristeva 1987a — *Kristeva, Julia.* In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Kristeva 1987b — *Kristeva, Julia.* Tales of Love / Trans. by Leon S. Roudiez. New York; Chicester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Robespierre 1997 — *Robespierre, Maximilien.* On the Moral and Political Principles of Domestic Policy // The Internet Modern History Sourcebook / Ed. Paul Halsall. Fordham University, The Jesuit University of New York. Aug. 1997. URL: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/robespierre-terror.asp

Hawthorn 2007 — *Hawthorn, Jeremy.* Sexuality and the Erotic in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad. London: Continuum International Publishing, 2007.

Sheffield 2006 — *Sheffield, Frisbee C.C.* Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Warodell 2011 — *Warodell, Johann.* Twinning Rider Haggard's Ayesha and Joseph Conrad's Kurtz // Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland). Vol. VI / Ed. Jolanta Dudek. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2011.

Watt 2000 — *Watt, Ian.* Essays on Conrad. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Watt 2007 — *Watt, Ian.* Heart of Darkness and Nineteenth-Century Thought // Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness / Ed. by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke. Routledge Guides to Literature, Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2007.