The "Deconstruction" of Colours in Conrad's Fiction

Armela Panajoti, University of Vlora

Abstract

Conrad's fiction is remarkable for its ambiguous affluence of symbolic layers. His fondness for blurring mythological, linguistic, etymological and anthropological boundaries seems designed to put into question strongly-held beliefs and conventions, and above all, civilization itself.

The paper focuses on the significance of colours in Conrad's fiction and his disposition to undo or deconstruct their traditional referents. Apart from the black and white dichotomy, which marks his fictional descriptions, Conrad undoes the conventional associations of other colours as well, such as green, brown, silver, and red.

The paper aims to point out that the author's intention in doing so is to demonstrate that these associations have been established by the ancient European civilization and decides to test them in the context of other civilizations where they are "deconstructed" confirming that Western European conventions can not establish standards of judgement as long as no civilization can prove to be superior to the other.

In my view, it is his ambivalent questioning of these cultural values and conventions that makes Conrad's work relevant to the context of the twenty-first century as well.

Conrad's fiction displays great fondness for ambiguous symbolic references. Its remarkable tendency is to disturb mythological, linguistic, etymological and anthropological boundaries in order to put into question strongly-held beliefs and conventions and above all civilization itself. The contrasts Conrad attempts to create, in order to probe the heart of their matter, rely extensively on the visual, for as he himself proposes in the Preface to the *Nigger*, his chief artistic intention is "to make you see"[1].

His fiction, although extensively outlined by the black and white dichotomy, does not restrict itself to this only, but encompasses other colourful contrasts instead, to the point that the images he creates duly attain to the quality of great paintings. My analysis focuses on the significance of other colours in Conrad's fiction and his disposition to undo or deconstruct their traditional referents. The several cultural associations they come to be identified with are tested and eventually undone by the Conradian context in a variety of ways in order to prove their inconstancy in view of the individual perception. The use of colours is, in my view, part and parcel of that adjectival insistence which is so typical of Conrad's fiction.

The paper analyzes three of Conrad's major works, namely *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*. Each of them provides what we often identify as the exotic Conradian

[1] Kimbrough, Robert, ed. 1979. *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. p.147

setting, which I prefer to define as the non-English setting which is colourful and provides for Conrad the necessary context for the characters to self-expose.

The milieu in *Heart of Darkness* is the centre of Africa, the Congo. Geographically speaking, the setting Conrad provides in this story is real. In *Nostromo*, Conrad creates an imaginary setting, which tends to approach the real. Costaguana is very much modelled upon Latin American countries, more particularly Panama. In the second part of *Lord Jim* the events of the story move to Patusan, again an imaginary setting, which this time tends to remain in this domain.

In the three novels, Conrad makes extensive use of the colours of nature, that is, green and brown. The choice of their referents appears to be almost the same in the three works, but it is their frequency of use in each respective work, which marks the difference in emphasis and therefore in their thematic associations. The natural green is, of course referred to by the grass, bushes, trees, ravines, and gorges. In *Nostromo*, the reader finds all these natural settings, but the frequency of use is higher for the word that identifies them altogether, that is "green." The following passage illustrates Conrad's intention in doing so:

> He was in charge of the whole population in the territory of the mine, which extended from the head of the *gorge* to where the cart track from the foot of the mountain enters the plain, crossing a stream over a little wooden bridge *painted green--green, the colour of hope, being also the colour of the mine*. (*N* 128; emphasis added)

It appears that Conrad conceives of green as being dual; the word *green* is the signifier of two signifieds recognized in this same physical and linguistic context. There is first the natural green, that is the gorge and next the unnatural green, which becomes the symbol of the mine. The two appositional phrases in "green, the colour of hope, being also the colour of the mine" bear an equational relation, which identifies "hope" and "mine" as synonymous to each-other, thus embodying Charles Gould's view of the success of the mine as hopebringing. The success of the mine will eventually bring about the extinction of the green beauty once occupying the territory of the mine. The "cruelty" displayed by the unnatural green towards the natural one deconstructs, so to speak, Charles Gould's former ideal.

The word "ravine", very much suggestive of the green, sees two grammatical uses in the text, in singular and in plural. Its use in the plural form emphasizes the inaccessibility of the land of Sulaco. Sir John, the chairman of the railway board, tells Mrs Gould that they "have been upset twice in one day on the brink of *very deep ravines*" (*N* 210; emphasis added), Hernandez, the bandit is reported "to be lurking *in the ravines* of the coast range" (*N* 210; emphasis added), or the legendary treasure is said to be guarded "by devils and ghosts *in the deep ravines* of Azuera" (*N* 260; emphasis added). Unlike its use in the plural form, the use in the singular is mostly related to the beauty, safety and secrecy of the place. By contrast, the green beauty surrounding the San Tomé mountain owes much to the ravine and its waterfall:

> In *a high ravine* round the corner of the San Tome mountain (which is square like a blockhouse) the thread of a slender waterfall flashed bright and glassy through the dark green of the heavy fronds of tree-ferns. (*N* 133; emphasis added)

When Nostromo leaves Decoud alone on the Great Isabel, he advises him to "keep close to the ravine" (*N* 290). The ravine of the Great Isabel will become the refuge of the stolen silver treasure:

> He perceived that none of them had any occasion even to approach the ravine where the silver lay hidden; let alone to enter it. (*N* 466)

In *Heart of Darkness*, there is little mention of the colour itself and great emphasis upon its referents - grass, bush and tree. The effect intended in this case is the creation of unspoilt and intact scenery. The verbal progress of these words in the novella becomes symbolic of the progress into the wilderness. Marlow's initial impeded movement into the wilderness proceeds "through the long grass" (*HD* 23); later, overhearing the manager and his uncle, he has a view of them "tugging painfully uphill their two ridiculous shadows of unequal length, that trailed behind them slowly *over the tall grass*" (*HD* 35; emphasis added) and finally when he reaches Kurtz's station, he notices that "a long decaying building on the summit was half buried *in the high grass*" (*HD* 52; emphasis added). The adjectival transition *long - tall – high* coupled with the prepositional transition *through – over – in* becomes symbolic of the progress into the darkness. Paradoxically, this progress is literally green, but the greater the progress through greenness, the closer the meeting with the darkness. Kurtz's meeting with the green African freedom exposes him to the freedom from the constraints of "civilization", which exposes his soul to cannibalism and in the end brings about his physical annihilation. The meeting with greenness results to be metaphorically a meeting with death. This is anticipated from the very beginning of the novel when Marlow steps into the shoes of Fresleven, his Danish dead predecessor; he notices that "the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones" (*HD* 13).

The green scenery of Patusan in *Lord Jim* contains all the forms of vegetation present in the Congo of *Heart of Darkness*, the most frequently mentioned being tree. This scenery is emblematic not only of the natural riches this land offers, but also of its remoteness from people like Jim. It provides him with access to imagination and becomes the playground for the realization of all his ideals. As Royal Roussel puts it, "Patusan …is associated not only with the heights which are the setting of Jim's early dreams, but also with a kind of art which, Stein suggests, allows the perfect embodiment of these dreams. …the distance between Patusan and man's concrete existence is precisely that between life and art …" (1971: 96)

Interestingly enough, the imagery of massive vegetation appears in the three works:

> *The great wall of vegetation*, an exuberant and entangled mass of trunks, branches, leaves, boughs, festoons, motionless in the moonlight, was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence. (*HD* 32; emphasis added)
> … the very road had vanished *under a flood of tropical vegetation* as effectually as if swallowed by the sea; and the main gallery had fallen in within a hundred yards from the entrance. It was no longer an abandoned mine; it was a wild, inaccessible, and rocky gorge of the Sierra, where vestiges of charred timber, some heaps of smashed bricks, and a few shapeless pieces of rusty iron could

> have been found under the matted mass of thorny creepers covering the ground. (*N* 93; emphasis added)
>
> "Jim, as I've told you, accompanied me on the first stage of my journey back to the world he had renounced, and the way at times seemed to lead through the very heart of untouched wilderness. The empty reaches sparkled under the high sun; between *the high walls of vegetation* the heat drowsed upon the water, and the boat, impelled vigorously, cut her way through the air that seemed to have settled dense and warm under the shelter of lofty trees." (*LJ* 196; emphasis added)

This exuberance of vegetation pervasive in the three descriptions is suggestive of a world far remote from the world the main protagonists have inhabited so far. The Congo is remote from the world of European civilization Marlow represents; the imaginary Sulaco is slow at keeping pace with the ongoing modernity and Patusan becomes the artistic milieu for the exertion of imagination. By entering this world, each of the main characters reaches the point of satisfying their ideals but fails to keep to it, which brings about their downfall. Kurtz's entrance into the wild nature marks a rebirth, which eventually introduces him to his other self. His total surrender to the evil self will ultimately bring about his utter moral and physical destruction. To Charles Gould, the mining enterprise will cost him the loss of his spiritual life and barrenness of private pleasures. And Jim's inability to handle his past will deny him the rebirth Patusan promises to offer.

The local flavour of these settings is reinforced by the use of the colour brown as well. The Indian inhabitants, the miners of the San Tomé, are brown in complexion. Conrad frequently emphasizes the detail, as for example in Don Pepe's "nut-brown, lean face" (*N* 127), "the chocolate-coloured faces of servants" (*N* 127) etc. Outwardly, the change that has taken place in Nostromo, now known by his real name, Captain Fidanza, is informed by "the vulgarity of a brown tweed suit" (*N* 467).

Brown is noticeable in the geography of Patusan and the complexion of its people as well. Natural colours like green and brown are often related to the feminine in Conrad's fiction. In Patusan, Jim finds maternal warmth missing in his life. He takes pride in the Patusanian landscape. Why is Jim, then, denied rebirth in Patusan? In Conrad's fiction, the feminine is destructive to the male protagonist. Significantly, the character who brings about Jim's downfall is named Brown. Marianne De Kovenn argues:

> In the end, Conrad decides that Jim is, after all, too white, too much one of us, to sustain the remarkable fusion with the brown and the female that he temporarily achieves in Patusan. (490)[2]

The brown female image appears more vigorously in the description of the African woman at the shore:

> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things,

[2] Moser, Thomas, ed. 1996. *Lord Jim*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

> charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (*HD* 60)

Although Conrad avoids mentioning it directly, this colour is pervasive in the whole description, not only in her complexion, "tawny cheek", but also in the things she carries. There is a drop of it in her impressively superb appearance. The effect is better achieved by not naming the colour. As Adam Gillon suggests:

> Even some of his [Conrad's] nonvisual descriptions of character reinforce the "color scheme" of the intended portrait or draw our attention to the artist's design. Thus, the often excessive use of appositional phrases no less than his adjectival style in descriptions of scenery produces the result achieved by the painter with a bold stroke of his brush or chalk … (1994: 117)

She is like the productive brown soil, she is life herself. She represents the irresistible African temptation to which hollow men like Kurtz are fragile, symbolically conveyed by the amount of ivory upon her.

Red becomes an equally typical colour in the descriptions of Charles Gould:

> Born in the country, as his father before him, spare and tall, with a flaming moustache, a neat chin, clear blue eyes, auburn hair, and a thin, fresh, red face, Charles Gould looked like a new arrival from over the sea. (*N* 87)

Much of him is suggestive of the royal, his name, his behaviour. Christopher Cairney reads the colours characterizing Gould in the context of these regal overtones:

> In the light of the fictional and constructed Charles IV and the hailing of his statue as a "saint", we might suggest that the "saint" recalls "St Petersburg" and connections with "the Bronze Horseman." The colours linked to Gould may also point in this direction. Peter the Great made the first Imperial Russian flag red, blue, and white, basing his choice on the colours of the Duchy of Moscow, gules and argent in Moscow's coat-of-arms, with yet another imperious Russian horseman, a cavalier in white armour rearing on a white horse against a red background. (2004: 114)[3]

The juxtaposition of red and blue in Charles Gould's descriptions acquires another metaphorical meaning in relation to his character. Though in painting[4] red is classified as a warm colour and blue as a cool colour they unite together in this context and add to the

[3] Cairney, Chrisptopher. "Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and 'The Horse of Stone in *Nostromo*." The Conradian. Vol. 29, No. 2 (2004:110-114)

[4] Thompson, Evan. *Colour Vision: A Study in Cognitive Science and the Philosophy of Perception*. Routledge. New York. 1995

same meaning. The quality of Charles's "flaming moustache" (*N* 87) is overemphasized in the novel and of his blue eyes we are in an instance given a report of his "enveloping her [Emilia] in the steely blue glance of his attentive eyes" (*N* 216). It is the adjectival choice of "flaming" and "steely" which undoes the quality of these colours. Both adjectives suggest extremity of quality, which is not at all positive and in the fictional context becomes responsible for the passionate form of fetishism his involvement with the silver will assume, which in its turn will estrange him from his wife, as in the case of the "steely glance."

Despite the fact that Jim's whiteness is overemphasized by Conrad, his personality, especially in the first part of the novel is better defined in terms of blue and red juxtaposition:

> The *red of his fair sunburnt complexion* deepened suddenly under the down of his cheeks, invaded his forehead, spread to the roots of his curly hair. His ears became intensely crimson, and even the *clear blue of his eyes* was darkened many shades by the rush of blood to his head. (*LJ* 48; emphasis added)

The colour of his cheeks symbolizes shame, but the "clear blue of his eyes" is rather ambiguous. They are clear, but they offer no clarity of vision. They are rather impenetrable, which explains Marlow's bewilderment at his failure in understanding him:

> The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog- bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country. They fed one's curiosity without satisfying it… (*LJ* 49)

Silver and ivory become dominant images in *Nostromo* and *Heart of Darkness* respectively. As key symbols to these works, they prove to reveal most characters' preoccupations, faults and aspirations. Much critical speculation has been exhausted as to Conrad's choice of the silver as the material wealth of Sulaco, especially when we are told that the territory of the mine is rich in ores; among those, counted the first is gold and then silver and more particularly when the story is framed by the legend of the perished gold in the blighted Azuera. But the story Conrad is about to tell is the story of a silver mine and of a silver treasure. The choice of silver is subtly conceived, because it allows Conrad to investigate far more complex human issues permitted by the elusiveness of meanings often associated with silver and which the choice of gold denies or simplifies, especially in the view of its being superior to the other ores. In its turn, the choice of ivory proves to be as intriguing as that of silver. Its uniqueness in terms of African riches turns out to be tantalizing to the greedy Europeans to the point of bringing about their downfall.

Despite their preciousness as riches, it is their adjectival function in both works that makes them far more intriguing. In this respect, Nostromo's taciturn, shadowy appearance in the first part of the novel is greatly marked by silver, "a phantom-like horseman mounted on a *silver-grey mare*" (*N* 125; emphasis added). His attachment to the silver assumes the form of a high consideration of it as an "incorruptible metal" (*N* 288). Every single part of his outfit has a touch of silver:

> When the carriage moved on he took off his hat again, a grey sombrero with a *silver* cord and tassels. The bright colours of a Mexican serape twisted on the cantle, the enormous *silver* buttons on the embroidered leather jacket, the row of tiny *silver* buttons down the seam of the trousers, the snowy linen, a silk sash with embroidered ends, the *silver* plates on headstall and saddle, proclaimed the unapproachable style of the famous Capataz de Cargadores--a Mediterranean sailor--got up with more finished splendour than any well-to-do young ranchero of the Campo had ever displayed on a high holiday. (*N* 149; emphasis added)

Two attributive uses of silver define Nostromo in an auditory context that anticipates his change in outlook in novel. At the beginning of the novel, when he is so much praised for his indispensability to the English and foreigners in Sulaco and prior to his adventure on the lighter, he appears very authoritative, symbolically indicated by the possession of the silver whistle:

> Then he took out the *silver whistle* he is in the habit of using on the wharf (this man seems to disdain the use of any metal less precious than silver) and blew into it twice, evidently a preconcerted signal for his Cargadores. (*N* 229; emphasis added)

The auditory power of the whistle is external, in this case directed to the cargadores to have them obey. Later this auditory power in internalized when Nostromo takes possession of the silver treasure:

> It seemed to him that she ought to hear the clanking of his fetters--his *silver fetters*, from afar. (*N* 482; emphasis added)

The silver fetters, abstract in existence, become a symbol of Nostromo's captivity with the silver. He comes to hate the touch of the silver ingots and when he inspects his hands after touching any of them he is "surprised they had left no stain on his skin" (*N* 464). Physically speaking, the silver contact does not seem to affect his senses, though in one way Nostromo wishes it did. But if it did, it would not comply with his ambiguous confession to Decoud that "…silver is an incorruptible metal that can be trusted to keep its value for ever …" (*N* 288). The irony of silver incorruptibility does not stain Nostromo's body but mind:

> There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind. (*N* 415)

Conrad does not dismiss gold from the novel, but uses it instead to provide an interesting interdependent relation with silver well-informedly put into linguistic terms. Nostromo juxtaposes gold and silver in two instances in the novel; the first occurs at the end of part one in his glorious scene with the Morenita, and the second by the end of part three in his conversation with Giselle. To the Morenita'a request for "a gold-mounted rosary of beads for the neck of her Madonna" (*N* 152), Nostromo misapprehendedly gives a silver response by offering her a knife to cut off all the silver buttons of his jacket. Here response is no promise but display and it affirms the deconstructed proverbial "Silence is

golden" into "Silence is silver", to use Aaron Fogel's words (1987: 119)[5]. In the second instance he reverses the order of things and offers to the golden-haired Giselle "a treasure of silver to buy a gold crown for [her] brow" (*N* 477).

The most intriguing juxtaposition of silver and gold is to be found in Charles Gould. The ambiguous choice of his surname, Gould, undoes the gold that is in it as if to indicate his transition from the world of words into that of silence once the silver of the mine "fastens" upon his mind. Fogel argues:

> Gould - hence his name - seems to personify the proverb, or cliché, that silence is golden, but the whole effect is vaguely ridiculous, and in reality, he is in possession of silence and silver, a more ambiguous, less absolute, more comically mechanical power. (1987: 121)

It is this mechanical power and his fetish for silver that turn the heart of the fairy-like Emilia into "a wall of silver-bricks" (*N* 227).

In *Heart of Darkness,* Conrad employs the parallel between the pale colour of ivory and the pale colour of the dead in order to symbolize death:

> The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. (*HD* 26)

Ivory has turned into an idol that makes up for the spiritual emptiness of those who are hollow to the core. The greed Marlow perceives from the very beginning of the novel will finally lead to spiritual, moral and physical decay, whose embodiment is Kurtz himself. When Marlow finally meets him, he is already the incarnation of death, "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory" (*HD* 59).

Conrad retains the meaning of cowardice often related to yellow, but deconstructs it by associating it with the powerful. Father Beron, the torturer, has "a dingy, yellow complexion" (*N* 345), Pedrito Montero's bald forehead has "a shiny yellow expanse between the crinkly coal-black tufts of hair" (*N* 372), Sotillo, the "muy valiente" colonel, has his face turn "yellow with the strain of weighty cares" (*N* 400), Cornelius has a "sour yellow little face" (*LJ* 192), Brown's eyes are yellow.

Of Teresa Viola we are told that, "She had a handsome face, whose complexion had turned yellow because the climate of Sulaco did not suit her at all" (*N* 63). The irony of her yellow stands in the fact that hers is ageing yellow like the ageing yellow of Sulacan houses, which characterizes the "worn-out antiquity of Sulaco" (*N* 126).

At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness,* we get this view of Marlow:

---

[5] Aaron Fogel suggests that "…silver in the novel has to be understood both in its relation to the book's dialogue forms and in its historical connotations…. *Nostromo* carries on, but in a more subtle and unforgettable way, this project of a chiming or parallelism between an economic currency - in Sulaco silver - and an illusory, pseudoliberating dialogical currency - in Sulaco no longer voice but silence… According to convention, of course, "silence is golden." In the structure of *Nostromo*, "silence is silver." That is, both are secondary or dependent currencies, relatively unstable in comparison to the main currencies, language and gold." ("Silver and Silence: Dependent Currencies in Nostromo" 1987: 119); Bloom, Harold, ed. *Joseph Conrad's Nostromo*. Chelsea House, 1987.

> He had sunken cheeks, a *yellow complexion*, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. (*HD* 7)

The Buddha posture Marlow assumes at the beginning of his storytelling has been viewed in different critical ways, either serious or ironic. Robert Wilson, for example, argues that "Conrad uses Buddhism as a perspective on the influence of God, his value, and the effect the world has on him" (1987: 45). Whatever the view adopted, what is important is the fact that Marlow attempts to invite his listeners to meditation, but they fail to look beyond the exterior of the narrative and the meditation is transferred to Marlow himself.

Apart from resorting to juxtaposition as a way of coping with colours, Conrad mixes them together, thus creating colourful patchworks. These patchworks of colours assume diverse forms in the three works. In *Nostromo* they appear in the form of the progressive parade of various colourful flags[6] flying up in the air of Sulaco. In *Lord Jim*, the view of the street before Jim reaches the court room is much "like a damaged kaleidoscope: yellow, green, blue, dazzling white, the brown nudity of an undraped shoulder, a bullock-cart with a red canopy…" (*LJ* 96). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, standing in front of the map "marked with all the colours of a rainbow" (*HD* 13), informs us that he "was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre" (*HD* 13). Later pondering on the appearance of the Russian boy, he finally finds out that:

> He looked like a harlequin. His clothes had been made of some stuff that was brown holland probably, but it was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow--patches on the back, patches on the front, patches on elbows, on knees; coloured binding around his jacket, scarlet edging at the bottom of his trousers; and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all this patching had been done. (*HD* 53)

These colourful patchworks, either representing political instability as in the case of Sulaco or religious "promiscuity"[7] as in the case of the Russian boy contribute to what Ramon Fernandez views as Conrad's successful attempt to "gratify us with sensations, with visions, with atmospheres, to leave us vibrating with the thousand emanations of a world which knows us better than we can know it" (2006: 13)[8].

The subversion of the traditional symbolism of colours can be ultimately said to mark Conrad's most sophisticated fictional progress, because it adds an intriguing dimension to what is frequently termed as Conrad's ambiguity. In the end, all this Conradian process of doing and undoing makes allowances for the reader to, as Martinière summarizes,

---

[6] There is mention of four flags in the course of the novel, the national flag of Costaguana, "diagonal red and yellow, with two green palm trees" (146); the Sulaco National Guard flag, "an enormous green and yellow flag" (355); the San Tomé flag, "green and white" (140) and finally the Occidental flag, "white, with a wreath of green laurel in the middle encircling a yellow amarilla flower" (435).

[7] Robert Wilson suggests that, "His harlequin costume of many patches indicates his association with a variety of religions" (1987:46); Wilson, Robert. *Conrad's Mythology*. The Whitston Publishing Company. Troy, New York. 1987.

[8] The reference is to the article "The Art of Conrad" by Ramon Fernandez incorporated in Paccaud-Huguet, Josiane, ed. *Conrad in France*. Columbia University Press, New York. 2006.

"deconstruct his own perception of reality, in an increasingly intellectual game that both questions tradition and modernity and relies ultimately only on the metaphorical dimension of language" (2006: 248).[9] Nevertheless, the endings to each of these novels, Marlow's lie, Nostromo's "conquests of treasure and love" (*N* 498) or Jim's "proud and unflinching glance" (*LJ* 246) provide a new deconstructive light in the midst of this dialectical process, which undoes the process itself and affirms the need to believe in some standards, namely standards of heroism and idealism.

Works cited

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Joseph Conrad's Nostromo*. Chelsea House, 1987.

Cairney, Chrisptopher. "Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and 'The Horse of Stone in *Nostromo*." *The Conradian*. Vol. 29, No. 2 (2004:110-114).

Gillon, Adam. Brebach, Raymond ed. *Joseph Conrad--Comparative Essays*. Texas Tech University Press. Lubbock, TX. 1994.

Kimbrough, Robert, ed. *Heart of Darkness*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1988.

Moser, Thomas, ed. *Lord Jim*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1996.

Nadelhaft, Ruth, ed. *Nostromo*. Broadview Press. Canada. 1997.

Paccaud-Huguet, Josiane, ed. *Conrad in France*. Columbia University Press, New York. 2006.

Roussel, Royal. *The Metaphysics of Darkness. A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction*. The John Hopkins Press. 1971.

Thompson, Evan. *Colour Vision: A Study in Cognitive Science and the Philosophy of Perception*. Routledge. New York. 1995.

Wilson, Robert. *Conrad's Mythology*. The Whitston Publishing Company. Troy, New York. 1987.

[9] The reference is to the article "Sight, Geometry and Metaphorical Architecture in *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*" by Nathalie Martinière incorporated in Paccaud-Huguet, Josiane, ed. *Conrad in France*. Columbia University Press, New York. 2006