

MIGRATORY BIRD TAKES SECOND CHANCE

Reading *Heart of Darkness*
with Chinua Achebe, David Dabydeen, Derek Walcott, Caryl
Phillips

Roberta CIMAROSTI

ABSTRACT • *Heart of Darkness* has been the first distinct specimen in the increasing number of literary works that may be identified today as migration literature in English by writers for whom English developed as a foreign language. I will explore the way in which *Heart of Darkness* contains the story of Conrad's naturalized English, and the way in which the novella was received in the work of four contemporary writers who move natively within the transcultural, hyphenated world of English, empowered by the energy of their plural identity. How have they reacted to the novella and the indelible track it left in their skies? Does the track feel like a wound, like a remote route, like an orienting pathway, or just like poison polluting the migratory way? We'll find this out, along with an attempt to understand Conrad's use of English, in Chinua Achebe's well-known essay *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, David Dabydeen's novel *The Intended*, Derek Walcott's lines from *Omeros* and *White Egrets*, Caryl Phillips' 'video-narrative' *Bends in the River*.

KEYWORDS • Migration Literature, *Heart of Darkness*, English, Rewriting.

Again, just as the door opens up and the author teases us with the possibility of weaving his own experience into the narrative, he quickly slams it shut again and continues.
(Phillips 2011: 262)

1. Taking Flight – Introductory Notes

and having turned our stern toward morning,
we made wings out of our oars in a wide flight
(Dante, *Inferno*, XXVI: 124-25)

Heart of Darkness has been the first distinct specimen in the increasing number of literary works that may be identified today as migration literature in English by writers for whom English developed as a foreign language. I will explore the way in which *Heart of Darkness* contains the story of Conrad's naturalized English, and the way in which the novella was received in the work of four contemporary writers who move natively within the transcultural, hyphenated world of English, empowered by the energy of their plural identity. How have they reacted to the novella and the indelible track it left in their skies? Does the track feel like a wound, like a remote route, like an orienting pathway, or just like poison polluting the migratory way? We'll find this out, along with an attempt to understand Conrad's use of English, in

Chinua Achebe's well-known essay *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, David Dabydeen's novel *The Intended*, Derek Walcott's lines from *Omeros* and *White Egrets*, Caryl Phillips' 'video-narrative' *Bends in the River*.

European writers like Conrad who switch to English departing from their mother tongue, mostly in concomitance with a departure from their homeland, settle in a fluctuating state of dislocation, of estrangement and continuous wonder. They belong to the family of writers who, for a number of personal circumstances, develop and are moved by 'the thought of errantry', as studied in depth by Glissant, even before they switched to English and left the native shore. (Glissant 2010, 11-22) They uproot themselves from the acquired certitudes of a traditionally European sense of belonging, typically characterised by the triadic loyalty to one people, one nation, one language, which entails a clearly demarcated vision of oneself and of one's division from 'the others', on the basis of religion, ethnicity, class, gender, cultural tradition – of which one's national language is representative (Canagarajah 2013, 19-24). For writers like Conrad, articulating oneself in English means to set out *precariously* across this well delineated world and to violate its principles. It means to live a life of doubts, even about whether one will be able to arrive at destination and nestle in what one really had meant to say. It means to run the risk of falling apart and fail dramatically; to be ready for incessant fatigue. It also means to learn how to handle the unbridled passions of unbounded ambition, whose energy is yet also the fuel that propels one to take flight and then move onward, along with the 'incredible belief' that you can make it against all odds. Such a flight relies on an instinctual and inalienable devotion to literature, to the fragile strength by which it crosses the gravitational forces of historical and political matter of fact. When this kind of writing succeeds, the joy for the accomplished journey pays off and contributes to building more hope in a world where barriers increase in spite of the fact that its characterising complexion and features are those of migrants.

In many respects, this kind of writer resembles pretty much Dante's Ulysses. Unable to live in peace after his difficult arrival at home, he has to leave again, as if he didn't belong any longer *only* in his native place – "neither my fondness for my son nor pity / for my old father nor the love I owed / Penelope, which would have gladdened here, / was able to defeat in me the longing / I had to gain experience of the world / and of the vices and the worth of men. (Dante 1982, lines 94-99) The horizon has become a compass needle wavering like his impatience to set out and thread it again. Crucially, the urge to take flight, to explore, matches with Ulysses' story-telling gift. It fulfils his love for words which blends with his wanderings, because encountering peoples of different countries is the material of his stories. No wonder that Dante the exiled patriot and maker of the Italian language looks with sympathy at Ulysses' treachery and ambition. Ulysses is the image of Dante's infernal roaming around medieval Italy, away from his native Florence, but undertaking the mission of forging a language more real than Latin, more representative of his vernacular culture.

To move in a foreign language, in a foreign territory, may be liberating and so enhancing one's humanity. This is the consequence of the fulfilled need to create bonds across differences, which, because human exchanges are by nature evolutionary, often turn out to show similarities. Shared things form a middle ground, a common space that wasn't there before, removed from immediate contingency and whose existence depends on constant cultivation of this delicate terrain. Reflecting upon her writing in Italian, Jhumpa Lahiri has recently compared it to the experience of walking around Venice. (Lahiri 2015) It may start with exhausting crossing of bridges – sentences, words, accents, gestures, meanings, etc. – that may make us feel unstable, precarious and even trip embarrassingly or wanting to switch back to the more comfortable element of the mother tongue. Still, in this erring dimension, even mistakes are heightening because they lead us to see and touch with hand the ceilings and precincts of language and of over-determined cultural spaces. Not that a writer is ever happy to go wrong. But to concede to

oneself that *you can* make a mistake and be helped, understood, correct yourself, and so convey your message through that comprehension, is a healthy exercise. In the best cases it makes one feel that boundaries may shift, along with the domains of the language, which is made to show its often buried multi-rooted dictionary, and given the chance of developing new meanings, of getting enriched and so to extend beyond its ordinary definitions.

This is the use of Dante's Ulysses in Primo Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* (*Survival in Auschwitz*) (Levi 1996). Ulysses' exhorts his crew to take flight anew so as to preserve their humanity. "Consider well the seed that gave you birth: / you were not made to live your lives as brutes, / but to be followers of worth and knowledge" (Dante 1982, lines 118-20). Primo Levi, in the Auschwitz lager, chooses this Canto to teach Italian to a young Austrian who likes languages and is in charge of the prisoners. It is not the content of the Canto in itself but the struggle to translate it – even using their French as a lingua franca to help the transition into Italian – that fulfils the meaning of the Canto by building a human space of comprehension within the lager. "Here I stop and try to translate. Disastrous – poor Dante and poor French! All the same, the experience seems to promise well: Jean admires the bizarre simile of the tongue and suggests the proper word to translate 'age-old'. (Levi 1996: 112)

However, if for a writer to take flight from the restraints of one's familiar world through a foreign language, may be a liberating act, yet it entails an important premise: it must be an act of love, not of protest. This is at best exemplified in Joseph Brodsky's explanation for writing in English: to honour his love for Auden's poetry, "To Please a Shadow", as his essay's title on this topic says. It is not primarily to escape from a regime that had long made his life and writing impossible and which eventually expelled him altogether. "In parole più semplici, si è modificati da ciò che si ama, talvolta fino al punto di perdere tutta la propria identità"; i.e. 'put it more simply, we are changed by what we love, to the point of losing our entire identity'. (Brodsky 2004: 114) You can only migrate into English to follow your call helped by warm winds and sounds that have become familiar because they have long talked to your inner world.

Joseph Conrad followed his call and travelled bravely across many oceans. In spite of all concrete difficulties in navigating the language at vertiginous heights, of harsh criticism and accusations of betraying his homeland (in times in which today's Poland was a province of the Russian empire), he ever claimed his natural bond to English, the fact that he could only write in it.

The truth of the matter is that my faculty to write in English is as natural as any other aptitude with which I might have been born. I have a strange and overpowering feeling that it has always been an inherent part of me. English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption – well, yes, there was adoption; but it was I who was adopted by the genius of the language, which directly, when I came out of the stammering stage, made me its own. [...] All I can claim after all those years of devoted practice, with the accumulated anguish of its doubts, imperfections and faltering in my heart, is the right of being believed when I say that if I had not written in English, I would have not written at all. (Conrad 1919: v-vi)

When Conrad crossed the pillars of his known world, he left a troubled Europe that sent him along with his patriot parents out of Poland to live as exiles in Russia. He also left a childhood that had made him familiar with the early loss of his parents but also with foreign languages and literatures, particularly the English one that his widowed father translated by profession and taught him. Young Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski must have been looking for a wider space to live in than his cultural identity offered him, when he followed a still mysterious call to develop what he had enjoyed in life so far, and left to join the navy – the

French first and then the English, literally embarking on the two languages that he had studied at home, the latter to become his own craft.

He travelled to Marseilles, where he signed on as a sailor in the merchant marine on a voyage bound for the West Indies and Central America. Conrad soon discovered that there was something reliably soothing about a watery horizon, and he grew to love the solitude of the sea. For the next two decades he voyaged extensively in the Far East, and in Africa and in the Americas, his circumnavigations of the globe providing him with opportunities for both education and adventure. [Phillips 1999: xi]

Thinking of retiring from the sea, he contemplated the idea of becoming a writer and, in the best judgment of Virginia Woolf, he became the most 'illustrious' 'English' writer of the time. (Woolf 2016) Interestingly, in that essay Woolf commemorates Conrad as a 'divided' writer, as 'our guest', whose mastery will be no doubt remembered for his first novels, portraying typical English characters, i.e. seamen of actions, symbols of the nation. Not for the later novels which have contributed to keep him as a stranger in England, i.e. novels centred on Marlow, the disturbed, disturbing, narrator. This is the world that ex-alien T.S. Eliot rigidly circumscribed in his essay *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. The essay's subtitle reports the Oxford English Dictionary's first entry for the term 'definition' in connection with its historical root to obviously indicate its cultural, territorial, legacy: "1. The setting of bounds; limitation (rare) – 1483". (Eliot 1973) Eliot's essay maps out the entire English-speaking world as ranked by class, ethnic and religious belonging, providing a cartography of what it means to be part of the pure European and English tribe. The essay is a 20th-century compendium of a narrative that had tried to define the nature of 'the English people' across history, and which in the second part of the 19th century developed into a clear-cut division between the descendants of the white Anglo-Saxon root and those stemming from more distant colonial ethnicities. (Young 2008)

It was extremely hard in Conrad's time to be considered an 'English writer' even for those native to the language. Conrad was animated by a profound wish to belong in that species to which he felt alike. The price that he had to pay for not being able to identify himself as a Polish-English writer was the necessity not to ever speak of his native home and language in his works and so hide his real nature and the way it would have sounded in English. Instead, it is the sense of dislocation, of being ill at ease in England, which his novels portray. (Said 2002) The colonial world became the scenarios of his stories and gave him characters of uncertain identities, moral doubts, indefinable views, characters who struggle in a sea of racist rapports, injustice and inhuman conditions. These had never been described with this intensity before by any European, least of all in the language of the world's most capillary empire. In short, the colonial world gave him material for his pioneering writing in constant tension between the Victorian world he worked for and was loyal to, and his own colonial identity and feeling for the situations he came into contact with. This mismatch he put into words and sentences that he had learned from scratch. No other language, no other personal situation, could have better equipped him to depict the world in which he set out.

Soon, the colonial world drew to a close and that sea was crossed by writers from the ex-colonies whose crafts and calls moved much more easily in English. The English language had adopted, colonised, people but these writers had appropriated it by shaping it according to the sounds and contents of their cultures and languages. To them, the sounds and contents of British English are siren songs. Their crafts – Walcott's, Achebe's, Soyinka's and many others' – move through a rootedness in their homeland that never comes short and by the missionary need to question the foundations of European knowledge in which monstrous ideas were bred, that could lead to enslaving and deporting millions of people across continents, and which was even

able to implode by causing the Jewish holocaust and mass killings in the heart of Europe in two world wars. In this context, Conrad's work, *Heart of Darkness* in particular, is addressed as a member of an uncertain species: the European colonial writer with his disturbed psyche, his brilliant prose hiding treachery, the loyalty to an ambiguous cause, the unnerving vagueness of spirit, the unbearable aimlessness in the use of language.

The reception of Conrad's most famous novella by Achebe, Dabydeen, Walcott and Phillips is a precious lesson to anyone wanting to explore the complexities of writing in English today. But before starting to take notes from those responses, I will explore *Heart of Darkness* along the lines of its author's adventures into English.

2. Into the Trap – a Reading of *Heart of Darkness*

It fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird.
(Conrad1: 22)

English may have naturally adopted him, as Conrad said, but it kept him in captivity. It demanded a sacrifice, which the writer had to make: to inhibit his complex identity, hence the roots of his affections. It embittered him and made his language sombre, depressing, poisonous. The novella depicts this condition of dwelling in the golden cage of English, within the secured fortress of Victorian convictions. It does so in two ways. 1) Its narrative frame – depicted by the yacht stuck on the Thames with its upper-class sea-lovers friends, including Marlow the freak – mirrors the rigid, inescapable cultural rules within which the novel speaks. 2) The Congo story is a swan song of sort, indirectly telling its own condition of diminished humanity, implied in the very fact that it intends to talk about it but restrains itself from doing it. It depicts the vacuous gaze within the cage of English.

We remember the frame of the Congo story. An anonymous narrator, an ex fellow traveller, reports the story that Marlow once told him and some other friends while waiting on the Thames to set off to some imprecise place. Marlow, who was there to function as the skipper of that sea-journey, played the narrator instead to pass the time. He's described as an extravagant, an exotic, whose words, we are intimated, are not to be taken too seriously. The narrator in the frame works as a buffet between Marlow's disquieting story and the audience whose peace must not be stirred, just as the Victorian status quo. The odd-one-out is bridled and cornered as the exception confirming the rule. So, after his grand praise of father Thames and all it means as a result of its accumulation of historical enterprises shaping the English tribe, Marlow's strange story too may be taken onboard.

The ordinary working of English as a colonial language, wielding its power over the people it rules, is also depicted in close detail, with an attentiveness and an alarmed alertness that may only come from one who lives in English but feels alien to it, one who, therefore, is sensitive to the body-language and silences that match sentences, and to the moves of inclusion and exclusion, which open or close the gate to a stranger. The entire first part of the novella stitches together reported conversations between Marlow and the 'Belgians' in charge of the company in the Congo: the Company's accountant, the manager, an agent. Just arrived at the station, Marlow meets the accountant and is struck by the way his appearance and job clash with the surrounding slavery and misery of the people who are dying while carrying out their labour and so absolving to the terms of their contract.

a white man, in such an unexpected elegance [...] I took him for a sort of vision. [...] I shook hands with this sort of miracle [...] I respected the fellow. Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy; but in the great

demoralization of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of sorts. (Conrad1: 36)

Later, just arrived at the Central Station, Marlow is summoned by the manager who couldn't care the less for his evident tiredness and keeps him standing to listen to an endless tirade. But most unnerving, to make Marlow hit the roof, are the manager's glances – indicating superiority, disappointment – and a smiling grimace bracketing every sentence he says producing a sense of uneasiness. It's the bifurcated tongue of power, saying two things at the same time, one of the two beating and insulting the person it speaks to.

he certainly could make his glance fall on one as a trenchant and heavy as an axe. But even at these times the rest of his person seemed to disclaim the intention. Otherwise there was only an indefinable, faint expression of his lips, something stealthy – a smile – not a smile – I remember it, but I can't explain. ... It came at the end of his speeches like a seal applied on the words to make the meaning of the commonest phrase appear absolutely inscrutable (41). He inspired uneasiness. That was it! Uneasiness. Not a definite mistrust – just uneasiness – nothing more. You have no idea how effective such a ... a ... faculty can be. (42)

The exchange with the agent displays the effect of the exercise of power through language: it weakens and kills the natural function of language, i.e. its functionality, its sense of purpose, which linguists have called its essentially 'goal-oriented' nature. (Leech 2008: 86-97) The agent's language is aimless, seems to have no practical use. In fact, it is moved by a thirst for gossips that tells of important connections, of promotions, of social relations that have nothing to do with language in itself but which use it to their own ends. This is in sharp contrast with purposeful Kurtz and his superb use of language to achieve his goal. "The chief of the Inner station [...] the guidance of the cause entrusted by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose." (47) Yet Kurtz had lost control of himself and of language and Marlow's secret mission is to rescue him and take him back to Europe.

When it is not describing the bars and intervals composing the cage structure, the novella turns inside and gives voice to its widely desolate emptiness. The expedition along the Congo river depicts this gloomy sense of loss and alienation from the cheerful sides of the self, from memories, from affections, from hope and dreams of the future. The disquieting, mourning atmosphere of the Congo journey seems to embody the feelings of an exiled writer as tangibly described by Edward Said; the sense of being forever cut off from one's affections and the unrecoverable bitterness that comes with it.

Is it not true that the views of exile in literature and, moreover, in religion obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has turned millions of people from the nourishments of tradition, family and geography? (Said 2002: 138)

Marlow's Congo river experience seems to reproduce a state of melancholia from which one cannot recover. (Freud 2007) Africa and its inhabitants are made to work as objective correlative of this dispiritedness, deriving from an intrinsic chronicled state of reclusion. Out of it only a tale of grief may sneak along, with characters that are gigantic shadows cast by the bars of the language trap. The bleak atmosphere, the piercing cry, the sense of threats rising with the fog, – are uncanny returns of a kid's joyful dreams and hopes. (Freud 2005)

Within this spectral atmosphere the reader moves with great difficulty. We get entangled in sentences that are obscure and far too long, which unfold endlessly and turn upon themselves through repetitive terms. We get lost in the rising abstractions and fumble for a concrete sense

of where we are and what the story is getting at. It gives off a feeling of going nowhere, of being teased. One wonders if this was the feeling of a writer talking through the serpent's maws.

The journey through the jungle wants to lead us to find out Conrad's early, innocent, love of English. Marlow tells us about the moment when the terrible switch happened, and from the admired white-patched map of the English-speaking world, of the British Empire that had inspired the wish to travel, the snake had impetuously come out, in the shape of the majestic Congo river, "a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled [...] Then I remembered there was a big concern, a company for trade on that river. Dash it all! [...] the snake had charmed me." (22)

The way the *bird* got swallowed by the *snake* is told cryptically through symbolic images which we are asked to decode and relate to each other as to reconstruct an enigma. They embody congealed fragments of unrecognisable memories, like pieces of the fledgling's feathers scattered on the cage floor by the serpent. On the way to the Inner Station, Marlow gets off the steamboat and gets into a hut where, on a wooden table, he finds an astonishing white-bounded book about the practicalities of navigation. On the book's margins are pencilled notes in a mysterious code, which is later discovered to be Russian. The book seems to stand for an early English handbook in which a kid studying in Russian (Conrad's other step-mother tongue) annotated equivalents, explanations, rules, pronunciations, and whatnots. We stop and wonder: Was English for Conrad an escape from hated Russian, the imposed language that also meant the exile of his parents and their own death? The moment of frenzied attachment that Marlow has toward this book and for the 'shelter' seems to plead with us to look for a recondite meaning that explains that outburst. We have reached the no-fly-zone of the novella's repressed biographical intention (Conrad: 66-67).

But it is exactly this fly zone of youth that we are – if secretly – made to enter when Marlow meets the crazed harlequin boy in love with anything English and of course with Kurtz's ways of speaking, i.e. the charming snake that keeps him in thrall. The novel makes us know that the boy and Kurtz have at least part of their name in common. While reading the 'illegible signature' (64) on the shelter's table, Marlow notices that it could be 'Kurtz but it's not because the signature is much longer'. Does the boy stand for the writer whose identity would be shortened after the adoption of English? This is surely what happened literally, as Conrad used his second surname 'Konrad' and written with 'C', to be identified as English. Does then Kurtz represent the switch to English as well as the effect it could have had upon the writer had he not restrained and raised the due limits to his own prose? Had Conrad obeyed Eliot's dictum contained in his *Notes*, in which getting too close to a culture not one's own, would lead to a transgression of the 'limits' of civilization, just as somebody 'by studying cannibals would end up becoming one'? "The man who, in order to understand the inner world of a cannibal tribe, has partaken of the practice of cannibalism, has probably gone too far: he can never quite be one of his own folk again." (Eliot 1973: 41) Is it in these wild terms that one's multicultural heritage and experience were asked to be thought of in Eliot's and Woolf's Europe, in terms of the old stereotypical encounter with non-Europeans?

The novella not only represents, if by enigmas, the reason of Conrad's self-limitation and self-repression. It also portrays the drama of his wound. A central episode revolves around the African "helmsman", an excitable freak that incoherently keeps opening the boat's shutter while under the harmless attack of Africans and who gets yet finally killed by a lance, dying a *mors Christi*, as a parable of God's Word, the incarnated Verb, which yet seems to have died before having been born. The dead helmsman's stare Marlow cannot take away from his eyes, feeling that a crucial message is being conveyed to him, which yet will remain mute, in the African man's mouth.

Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at! I stepped in quickly to close the shutter on the landside. That fool helmsman, his hand on the spokes, was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse. [...] I had to lean right out to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level of my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though a veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arm, legs, glaring eyes, – the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze colour. [...] The man stepped back swiftly, looked at me over his shoulder in an extraordinary, profound, familiar manner, and fell upon my feet. [...] stared straight up at me; both his hands clutched that cane. It was the shaft of a spear that, either thrown or lunched? Through the opening had caught him on the side just below the ribs; the blade had gone in out of sight, after making a frightful gash. (75-79, 89)

By following the signs which the narration has scattered all along for its autobiographical thread to be followed, we come to see the meaning of its cracked vision and voice: it stands for the cracked heart still beating in the darkness of the snake's throat. For Marlow the meaning of a story is in the 'cracked shell of a nut' and just as falling apart, unriveted, doomed to wreck, his steamboat is, image of his craft through the river of life. The finishing blow is portrayed in the final part of the story. Half-alive Marlow just come from inferno, goes to see Kurtz's betrothed, suitably called "the intended". She is closed in her bearable, dignified, unrecoverable mourning for dead Kurtz, and all he had meant and still means to her. Never mind that such knowledge is a load of lies and unsayable acts not worth of a human being. But Marlow, and Conrad, finally decided to keep the truth for themselves, and for those who have reasons to try and find it out by engaging with their stories.

3. Barred Vision – Chinua Achebe's *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*

The Nigerian novelist, father of African fiction in English, has notoriously condemned without appeal *Heart of Darkness* for its 'dehumanization of Africa and Africans' and claimed that 'Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist'. (Achebe 2010: 12-13) For Achebe, the novella has highly contributed to maintaining vivid the European stereotypical iconography and the myth of 'black Africa' spread in late Victorian times that depicts it as primitive and uncivilised. For Conrad there's no way out of Achebe's sentence. Even Caryl Phillips who dissents from this condemnation, after engaging in a thorough conversation with Achebe to understand his reasons, finally admitted that Achebe's position is understandable, for Conrad's was an insolent guest in Achebe's homeland, in a way that is difficult to see for a European.

Were I an African I suspect that I would feel the same way as my host. But I was raised in Europe, and although I have learned to reject the stereotypically reductive image of Africa and Africans, I am undeniably interested in the break-up of a European mind and the health of a European civilization. [...] Achebe is right; to the African reader the prize of Conrad's eloquent denunciation of colonization is the recycling of racist notions of the "dark" continent and her people. Those of us who are not from Africa may be prepared to pay this price, but this price is far too high for Achebe. However lofty Conrad's mission, he has, in keeping with time past and present, compromised African humanity in order to examine the European psyche. (Phillips 2011: 206-07)

In fact, as in admission of guilt, Conrad's novella depicts its own fabrication of Africa. The scene of the helmsmen's death ends with the man becoming an African mask.

Only in the very last moment, as though in response to some sign we could not see, to some whisper we could not hear, he frowned heavily, and that frown gave to his black death-mask an

inconceivably sombre, brooding, and menacing expression. The lustre of enquiring glance faded swiftly into vacant glassiness. (78)

It is indeed a glassy admission, i.e. transparent, invisible. However, this process of ‘mummification’ is the characterising feature of Conrad’s prose. Linguists have extensively analysed the impressive chains of noun phrases and nominalisations that characterise his writing yet without drawing any ‘literary’ or cultural conclusions. We need to understand Conrad’s style along a consideration of the ideological effects that such use of naming has in English, which a native would hardly notice, so natural these naming constructions are to the regular use of English grammar. (Jeffries 2010: 17-36) The main structural consequence is that the transitive action that usually flows in the subject-verb-object articulation of English is blocked, and either the subject or the object of the noun phrase, or both, get loaded within words that over-define them, in such a way that their over-connoted meaning becomes granted, assumed, whose significance becomes hard to question. Subjects and objects cease to be seen as changeable, as related to the actions of an active verb. We need only try and read the following passages and see how the African labourers are being shaped by noun phrases (marked in italics) that thicken all around the simple subject by adding defining adjectives and gerunds that thicken all around them creating complex naming blocks which are impossible to disentangle and rewrite in a different way. The mummification in course culminates in the astonishing image “bundles of acute angles”:

A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants. (32) [...] Six black man advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails. Each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. (33) [...] Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin. Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up, scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a pestilence.” (35)

The only way we can change this image is by rewriting the entire passage, the entire book, by getting rid of this style made of chains of passive structures, tying gerunds, successive adjectives and similes, and by using, instead, a transitive structure in which meanings pulse and circulate in a more lively, healthier way, which clearly shows who the subjects and the objects are and, especially, which the relation is that binds them. This change requires that the writer add a lot more information about his subjects and objects, which may not be so easy to get hold of. In this respect, it is not Achebe’s essay but his novel *Things Fall Apart* that is the most effective reply to Conrad’s novella.

Was Conrad aware of the implications of his narrative style? Did he want to depict the use of English as a colonising language? In the pages that precede the passages reported above, we see Marlow’s arrival in Africa on board of a ship. He speculates on the ridiculous names of places the ship passes by, while also noticing a “warship firing pointlessly at the African coast.”

We passed various places – trading places – with names like Gran Bassam, Little Popo, names that seemed to belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister black cloth. [...] In the immensity of earth, sky, and water, there the ship was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent [...] called them enemies [...] but these men could by no stretch of the imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outrage laws, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from over the sea. (30-31)

Marlow is very much aware of the devaluing consequence that naming may cause. In his typical dissenting view, he criticises the Western practice in defence of its victims. Why, then, has the novella made such an extended and fatal use of naming?

4. Fledgling within tiger's claws – David Dabydeen's *The Intended*

“Poetry is like a bird,” he said, “and it gliding or lifting and plunging,
wings outspread or beating and curving, and the whole music is in the bird wing.”
(Dabydeen1 2006: 70)

David Dabydeen's novel opens a special dialogue with *Heart of Darkness*. It interrogates the novella wanting to know those parts that it is reluctant to tell which concern Conrad's identity as a colonial migrant and a Polish-Russian-English novelist. These unsaid but intended parts of the novella 'talk' to the young Indian-Guyanese-British writer, who arrived in England as a boy from British Guyana to live with his father but ended up having to take care of himself and of his education. He did so greatly, managing to study and read in Cambridge as well as to become a writer. (Dabydeen2 2011)

A poem by William Blake, *The Tyger*, which is only referred to as an unimportant detail at the beginning of the novel, can yet be used to explore the ways in which Dabydeen's novel opens its dialogue with *Heart of Darkness* with the specific purpose of engaging with its latent autobiographical references.

4.1. “Fearful Symmetry”

To begin with, Dabydeen's novel addresses the correspondence between London and the Congo as pointed out by Marlow and confirms that 'fearful symmetry' is still in place.

Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forest of the night;
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

The Intended depicts the 'fearful symmetry' between the London of the 80s and the Victorian London-Congo in four major respects. (A) Dabydeen's four young characters grappling in the jungle of the British education system and of widespread racism mirror, in opposite terms, Conrad's well-off fellow travellers stuck in the Nellie yacht. They represent South Asian migrants settled in the capital, “The regrouping of the Asian diaspora in a South London schoolground” (8). (B) We see the four youths trapped in the British education system and its learning method, which preclude their access to self-knowledge as well to find their ways into the meanings of literary texts. This is exemplified in an episode describing an exam in which the students have to interpret Blake's poem according to a given set of meanings which, although mortifying *The Tiger* yet would make them pass. So we see Patel, one of them, copy from explanatory notes which would apply to very different texts. Out of school, these boys are

literally hunted and beaten to death by gangs of racists and the novel depicts them as ending up as brutally diminished as Blake's tiger poem. Here is the protagonist looking at his best friend's brother who also ended up in hospital: "I fancied he looked like Patel's tiger vanquished by the hunt." (15) (C) Marlow's Congo journey upriver is reproduced in two more realistic and updated versions that describe the protagonist's student life in England but also an unsettled psychological condition that applies to the 'newcomers' in a broader sense. In the summer the protagonist works at a funfair's 'World Cruise', in which boats float by all countries of the world in alphabetical order, each one depicted in stereotypical images, like a sordid abecedary. (D) A deeper journey, parallel to Marlow's trip downriver, is the one which is described as taking place during the protagonist's tube-rides, depicting the 'underground', invisible, transitions taking place inside the immigrants' minds in which their life's times and places blur and blend, but which become invisible again once they emerge from the tube station back to daylight. "In the London Underground we were forced into an inarticulacy that delved beneath the stone ground and barrier of language [...] and made for a new mode of communication: [...] we flashed glances at one another, each a blinding recognition of our Asian-ness, each welding in one communal identity." (16)

4.2 "In the furnace of the brain"

And what shoulder, & what art,
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
 And when thy heart began to beat,
 What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain,
 In what furnace was thy brain?
 What the anvil? What dread grasp,
 Dare its deadly terror clasp?

None of these students manage to grasp the meaning of Conrad's novella, when at some point they have to study it for their English class by using the prescribed close-analysis interpretative method, which excludes references to the author's life and to historical background, as well as any imaginative incursion into the text. It is their illiterate pal Joseph, a Jamaica-born half-orphan vandal, who is made to personify Conrad in his youth, to do so, even by giving voice to Achebe's critical view of *Heart of Darkness*! It's a lively portrait that puts side by side the imagined lyrical intelligence of Conrad as a young man, versus the experienced Victorian Conrad we know. Joseph knows art by instinct and abhors interpretative artifices that cage its poetic flights. He talks about the way poems are taught in school but his words indirectly make a broader comment on the self-restraint that Conrad exercises against his own art in *Heart of Darkness*: "putting iron-bar one by one in a spacious room so the bird flying round and round and breaking beak and wings against the wall trying to reach the sunlight. You turning all the room in the universe and in the human mind into bird cage." (70-71) And when Joseph's criticises Conrad's depiction of Africans, giving voice to Achebe's view, he embodies the very 'frenzy' by which Conrad characterises the African helmsman, that 'frenzy' which, however, Achebe's essay sees as the clear mark of Conrad's racism, not seeing, or not wanting to see, the meaning Conrad had intended.

'But what about the way he talk about black people?' Joseph persisted, jumping up from the bed and pacing the room in a sudden agitation. 'What black people?' I asked uncertainly. He snatched *Heart of Darkness* from my hand and peered at the page, unable to decipher the words, unable to

identify the blocks who had obviously set his mind blazing. ‘Where the bit about them lying under the trees dying?’ he demanded, shoving the book at me. [...] I was spellbound not so much by his crazy exegesis as by the passion of his outburst, the sudden surge of eloquence. (72-73)

Joseph is a chain-breaker, at ease when close to open spaces. He is constantly depicted ‘by a window’, as to indicate his need of fresh air, of freedom, but also the fact that he inhabits the anonymity of transition spaces, lacking precise identification. However, his existential location qualifies him to understand the meaning of Conrad’s ‘harlequin boy’, whom he sees as a clear image of himself– a person whose impossibility to define his composite nature brings it to pieces, which are at best assembled to look like a funny patchwork. (75) The novel subtly observes that Joseph is “weaving his personal history into the text” (75), hinting at the fact that not only is he breaking the norms of close-reading, but he is providing a most valuable interpretation of what *Heart of Darkness* intends to say through its harlequin.

4.3. “Stars threw down their spears”

When the stars threw down their spears
 And watered heaven with their tears:
 Did he smile his work to see?
 Did he who made the Lamb made thee?
 Tiger tiger burning bright,
 In the forest of the night:
 What immortal hand or eye,
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

By pursuing his gift as a young artist, moved by a wish to give shape to the still invisible presences of people like him, Joseph becomes a film-maker, and an increasingly conceptual one at that. His London-jungle films become ever more abstract and macabre to the point that his last achievement irritates the sympathetic protagonist, the only one who believes in his talent.

‘What’s the story behind it?’ I asked after he had reeled off half a dozen more bizarre images which culminated with a stream of black ants carrying flecks of food, making their way up the chest and neck of the tramp [...] only to be trapped in a mat of hair and sneezed out violently (this last image signified the experience of migration: the black ants were West Indians laden with suitcases landing on the tarmac of England, and the nostrils were the interrogation lounges at Heathrow). He ignored my question, as if it were too trivial to command an answer. (114)

Joseph is steadily moving toward self-destruction being utterly disillusioned about the chance of being understood. He wants his latest film to be buried in a coffin so as to be preserved for posterity. The film’s “set of open-ended symbols” (115), its abstractness, will be decoded through the future spectator’s understanding of its enigmatic images. In this way, the message will be saved and conveyed by transcending standard codification. Out of metaphor, Dabydeen’s novel suggests that Conrad interred cryptic symbols in *Heart of Darkness* are meant to tell his story as a migrant writer in English. However, it was the wrong aesthetic choice. We read this response in the episode of Joseph’s suicide as an extreme act of self-completion which he carried out by setting fire to himself after having made a last attempt to recompose his identity by inscribing its true name on the ground – COCOON. Dabydeen’s novel gives us a full explanation of this cryptic noun (139-40), but it makes us also infer that it has also to do with that ‘C’ by which Conrad translated his second surname, Konrad, further reducing his real identity.

At the end of *The Intended*, the protagonist rises as a fledgling writer from the ashes of Joseph's self-sacrifice. We see him studying in Oxford on his way to becoming a writer, thinking of Joseph who will ever be in his thoughts.

I am no longer an immigrant here, for I can decipher the texts, I have been exempted from the normal rules of lineage and privilege; yet he, an inveterate criminal, keeps breaking in, to the most burglar-proof of institutions, reminding me of my dark shadow, drawing me back to my dark self. As my mind stumbles over the difficult words in *Sir Gawain*, I see a little boy's foot being trapped in the pits and cavities of hardened mud as he hurries after the sound of an old man's stick. (140)

The contemporary novel acknowledges its debts to *Hart of Darkness* for teaching the necessity of imbuing writing with real life. It thus gives itself the chance that Conrad's novella had denied to itself. *The Intended* is imaginatively patterned through Dabydeen's biography and a language that blends lyrical innocence and historical experience, long episodes of his childhood in Guyana and life as a young artist in Britain. The two worlds have been safely bound together. The repair process also being secretly inscribed by echoes of the Conradian 'rivets'. The 'cracked nut', the disjointed fractured narratives that composes life and writing in English, has become a secure vehicle to move in and on, because its 'kernel', its rich core, is fully there and visible, and it even emerges to make us crack many a smile in the several humorous memories telling of the kid and of the young adult.

5. Re-takes – Derek Walcott's *White Egrets* and *Omeros*

Here is what the bastard calls "the emptiness"
(Walcott 2010: 80)

There are two responses to *Heart of Darkness* in the work of Derek Walcott that are worth being considered here, for two reasons: 1) they refer exactly to the two parts of *Heart of Darkness* that I used before to point out the use of naming in Conrad's prose; 2) they are indicative of the way the novella negatively impressed writers of the ex-colonial world and the way they have corrected them as outrageous mistakes.

A poem in the latest collection *White Egrets*, addresses the inadequate use of the word "emptiness" in Conrad's description of Marlow's first view of the African coast, where he's observing 'the worship firing pointlessly at the continent' and – as I noticed before – being blandly criticised by Marlow for its wrong definition of the Africans as 'enemies'. As we saw, they are far less than enemies. Walcott's poem breaks down the single word 'emptiness' into eight descriptive lines in which we are made to see, hear, feel, what that abstract word actually contains.

Here is what the bastard calls "the emptiness"–
that blue-green ridge with plunging slopes, the blossoms
like drooping chalices, of the African tulip, the noise
of a smoking torrent – it's his name for when rain comes
down the heights or gusts in sheets across the meadows
of the sea – "the emptiness," the phrase applies
to our pathetic, pompous cities, their fretwork balconies,
their retail stores blasting reggae, either India in the eyes
of uniformed schoolchildren or the emptiness. [...] (Walcott 2010: 80)

With quiet indifferent anger the poem addresses the migrant writer who can be anyone writing after the colonised world has come into being, i.e. ‘the bastard artist’, who should not stop at the simplified ready-made perception and articulation of what he or she sees. Rather, this artist has to face and handle the emptiness, the void that seems to be out there beyond the given definitions. Facing the terror – the horror – is to take the challenge of feeling and trying to depict the complexities of today’s world; the opposite of the paralysed prose of Conrad’s novella.

Conrad’s mistake is not only the consequential misnaming of places and people. It’s an insult against his own art, i.e. a curse against the sacredness of his gift. This the poem seems to imply by making us read the image of the “warship pointlessly firing / into the huge empty jungle” as an icon of Conrad’s own ‘worship’ of English but lacking the skill to handle it properly and, therefore, letting it go its own way into ‘hurting meaninglessness’. What may have led the novelist to give up the bridles and be carried away by his sinuous prose? The poem gives us this answer: Conrad uprooted himself and had no anchorage upon which to make lever and resist the power of his own language.

[...] The image
 is from Conrad, of a warship pointlessly firing
 into the huge empty jungle; all the endeavours
 of our lives are damned to nothing by the tiring
 catalogue of a vicious talent that severs
 itself from every attachment, a bitterness whose
 poison is praised for its virulence. This verse
 is part of the emptiness, as is the valley of Santa Cruz,
 a genuine benediction as his is a genuine curse. (Walcott 2010: 80)

The second response is in *Omeros*. The autobiographical character meets his father in a Conradian colonial scenario and, specifically, in an infernal setting that echoes that of *Heart of Darkness*, in which labourers exhausted to death are depicted in beastly terms and like ants. However, here the workers are bestowed not only with their humanity but beauty and dignity. It’s a lesson the father gives his son, asking him to write the same way they walk, following their balanced pace. It’s the lesson that Walcott got, if in irritatingly opposite terms, from Conrad’s novella. Only by being reversed, is it allowed access into the poem, where the strange controversial guest has been fully comprehended.

From here, in his boyhood, he had seen women climb
 like ants up a white flower-pot, baskets of coal
 balanced on their torchoned heads, without touching them,

up the black pyramids, each spine straight as a pole,
 and with a strength that never altered its rhythm.
 He spoke for those Helens from an earlier time:

“Hell was built on those hills. In that country of coal
 without fire, that inferno the same colour
 as their skins and shadows, every labouring soul

climbed with her hundredweight basket, every load for
 one copper penny, balanced erect on their necks
 that were as tight as the liner’s hawsers from the weight.

The carriers were women, not the fair, gentler sex.

Migratory Bird Takes Second Chance

Instead, they were darker and stronger, and their gait
was made beautiful by balance, in their ascending

the narrow wooden, ramp built steeply to the hull
of a liner tall as a cloud, the unending
line crossing like ants without touching for the whole

day. That was one section of the wharf, opposite
your grandmother's house where I watched the silhouettes
of these women, while every hundredweight basket

was ticked by two tally clerks in their white pith-helmets,
and the endless repetition as they climbed the
infernal anthracite hills showed you hell, early".

[...] They walk, you write;

keep to that narrow causeway without looking down,
climbing in their footsteps, that slow, ancestral beat
of those used to climbing roads; your own work owes them

because the couplets of those multiplying feet
made your first rhymes. [...] (Walcott 2003: 128, 130)

6. Back into the Future – Caryl Phillips' *Bends in the River*

Caryl Phillips's video-narration *Bends in the River* shows us an apocalyptic *Heart of Darkness* projected in the future of present time. The film's voiceover reads key-passages of Conrad's novella that interweave with Phillip's voice commenting on today's Thames, over which he is spending some days having been asked to reflect on that Conradian scenario.

The film begins with a powerful image from the first pages of the novella trumpeted by its anonymous narrator, boasting the golden English tradition with the glorious colonial adventures disseminated all around the globe – “the dreams of men, the seed of commonwealth, the germs of empires”. However, the words clash against the black and white desolation of the film's images and sounds so that we understand that the glimmering Father Thames of the novella has become a faded image of itself, an empty shell. The vigour of the English Empire and its colonial adventures disseminated all around the globe have yielded a stillborn reality, rendered through mourning, bleak sounds and sepia images of degradation and abandonment all scattered along the bends of the Thames. The young, cheerful, multi-coloured Britain which one would expect from centuries of colonial encounters have produced but sporadic timid signs of multiracial love – shown in beautiful images of young lovers – but lost in the widely desolate scenario.

The deluded view is that of a contemporary English writer momentarily returned to look again at the Thames, at his own legacy. If we immediately get the sense of his assessment, yet to understand his motivations is much harder. It requires us to see the point of each single reference he makes and then to see them all together in relation to each other. It's a viewpoint that requires at once anchorage and distance, depth and scope. For instance, we're still unsure if there is irony in his first original comment or if there is the joy for the still imaginable new birth of a multi-ethnic Britain:” And then I was rewarded with the drama of light crashing through the flimsy blinds and the dramatic announcement of a new day. I crawled out of bed and took in an

extraordinary vista: a 180°-view of London as she curves around a graceful bend in the river at the heart of the city.” (Phillips 2013)

Then the narrative switches to a strange historical present, displacing us. It takes us to the London of the 50s by bringing the most well-known character of Sam Selvon’s fiction into the picture. So we are still in the past, yet a time more recent than the one conjured through the quotes from *Heart of Darkness* – evoked as if it had congealed into the present but having lost the colourful liveliness and the music pervading Selvon’s London. At this point in the video we have a chance to understand what it is that has disappointed this Englishman.

Moses Alouette finds himself standing by the same river that I now perch high above. Despite the evidence of discrimination, poverty and power break that Moses is forced to endure throughout the novel, at the end of the novel our lonely Londoner is unable to jettison his images of expectation. He stands gloriously still on the bank of the Thames knowing that he can’t help loving this city that has effectively rejected him and his kind and somewhat ironically he comforts himself by lovingly recollecting London’s iconic images and locales. (Phillips 2013)

It is the cold, not-corresponded affection that England had for her first-generation migrants. The unconditioned love for London that the many ‘Moses’ demonstrate – in life and literature – is still unmatched these days and this backward stuck colonial mentality Phillips takes to amount for his legacy, as seen from his privileged position above the Thames. “I have exchanged visions of the Romans sailing on the Thames for Conradian visions of ships at anchor waiting for the fog to leave. I’ve contemplated contemporary images of immigrants sailing up the river and disembarking at Tilbury docks someway downriver to my right to my right.” (Phillips 2013) Then, the voiceover quotes Marlow’s words about the effects that the Thames had on him, but, in connection with what we have just been told and shown before, the video-narrative creates a blending of times and places, which has not yet happened neither in history nor in British society.

To understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me – and into my thoughts. It was somber enough too – and pitiful – not extraordinary in any way – not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light. (Phillips 2013)

The video’s sounds, images and voices project a twofold view from over the Thames: one upon the river, unfolding memories of colonial conquests; the other on the street, showing a more ordinary and migrant Britain, the other side of the same story. They have not yet blended, the way they should have. This failure to mix, to grow up, is the reason why Britain is figured out as a just-born nation, one whose childhood won’t be given the due care, as we infer from the image of an abandoned tricycle on the riverbank.

I scanned to the left and back to the right and then looked down at the people on the streets and there seemed to be disjuncture between the narrative on the street and the narrative suggested by this particular view. Such questioning seemed to me to be part of the legacy of growing up in the second half of the 20th century during the years in which Britain lost an empire and somewhat reluctantly began to refigure her sense of herself. These were the years Britain kicking and screaming became both multiracial and European. (Phillips 2013)

In this connection, Marlow’s famous claim about colonialism enters Phillips’s narrative where it is yet made to represent the features of an infant Britain, not yet clearly defined, whose

formation is in progress. “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.” (Phillips 2013)

Finally, although uninspired by the prospect of a boat-ride down the Thames, Phillips gives in, embarks on it and finds his Kurtz, i.e. the still undeveloped multi-ethnic Britain, which so far only literature and imagination have been able to develop. Predictably, he returns afterwards to his privileged iconic view over the Thames having brought home anything special to be treasured – “slightly more comfortable with my iconically powerful view.” The video ends with the voiceover quoting the famous last lines of *Heart of Darkness*, intimating that the chance of setting out has been lost again for the time being. ““We have lost the first of the ebb’, said the Director, suddenly.” [...] (Phillips 2013)

However, among the subtleties of Phillips’ video, is the use of the tenses working like a tidal motion wider than the river, embracing, nestling it. The voices have switched from the past perfect and past tense of the quoted novella, to the past tense of Phillips’s narrative recounting his stay above and along the Thames, clearly removed from the present, yet conceding a very brief opening, in the present perfect, to render his witnessing experience. This is soon sealed into the historical present describing Selvon’s London of the mid 50s. However, in the expression of this hopeless desolation, the last quote from *Heart of Darkness* – bracketed as it is between present perfect and past simple and to be read in light of Phillip’s journey down and upriver – may be interpreted as unfathomably optimistic. ““We have lost the first of the ebb’, [...] and the tranquil waterway [...] seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.” It seems to be saying that ‘yes, we may have lost a couple of chances to move on, but can’t this swan song prelude to a real departure and lead to a brand new day?’

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

- Achebe, C. (2010), *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness* [1975], London, Penguin.
- Alighieri, D. (1982), “Canto XXVI” in *Inferno* [1314], translated by A. Mandelbaum, New York, Bantam.
- Brodsky, J. (2004), “Per compiacere un’ombra” [1983] in *Fuga da Bisanzio*, Italian translation, Milano, Adelphi.
- Conrad1, J. (2000), *Heart of Darkness* [1902], London, Penguin.
- Conrad2, J. (1994), “Author’s Note” to a *A Personal Record* [1919], in Alicia Pausada, *The Multilingualism of Joseph Conrad*, in “English Studies”, 75 (4) 1994: 335-49.
- Dabydeen1, D. (2006), *The Intended* [1991], Leeds, Peepal Tree Press.
- Dabydeen2, D. (2011), *From Care to Cambridge*, in “Pax Britannica”, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press: 59-66.
- Eliot, T.S. (1973), *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture* [1941], London, Faber and Faber.
- Glissant, E. (2010), *Poetics of Relation* [1997], USA, University of Michigan.
- Levi, P. (1996), “The Canto of Ulysses”, *Survival in Auschwitz*, tr. of *Se questo è un uomo* [1947], New York, Simon and Schuster: 109-115.
- Phillips1, C., (1999), *Introduction to Heart of Darkness*, New York, Modern Library Edition: pp. xi-xviii.
- Phillips2, (2011), “Ha Jin: Exile in Main Street”, in *Colour Me English*, New York London, The New Press: 251-64.
- Phillips3, C. (2011), “Chinua Achebe: Out of Africa”, in *Colour Me English*, New York London, The New Press: 197-207.
- Phillips4, C. and Johnny Pitts (2013), *Bends in the River* available at <http://abendintheriver.artangel.org.uk/>.
- Walcott1, D. (2003), *Omeros*. [1990], Milano, Adelphi.
- Walcott2, D. (2010), *White Egrets*, New York and London, Faber and Faber.

Woolf, V. (2015) [1924], *Joseph Conrad*, in “The Common Reader”, web edition by [eBooks@Adelaide.https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c/index.html](https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c/index.html) Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016.

B. Secondary Sources

- Canagarajah, S. (2013), *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*, London, Routledge.
- Freud, S. (2007), *Mourning and Melancholia* [1917] London, Penguin.
- Freud, S. (2005), *The Uncanny*[1919] London, Penguin.
- Jeffries, L. (2010), *Critical Stylistics. The Power of English*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lahiri, J. (2015), *In altre parole*, Milano, Guanda.
- Leech, J. (2008), *The Language of Literature*. London. London.
- Said, E.W. (2002), “Reflections on Exile”, in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge Mass, Harvard U.P.: 138-49.
- Said, E.W., (1993), “Two Visions of *Heart of Darkness*”, in *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Vintage: 22-31.
- Young, R., (2008), *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, Chicester UK, Wiley-Blackwell.

ROBERTA CIMAROSTI • is adjunct professor of English Literature at the University of Padua, Italy and teaches Italian literature at Wake Forest University in Venice. Her main research interests are contemporary poetry in English, Anglophone literatures from around the world, and contemporary literacy in English. Among her latest publications: “Le Antille e il dizionario di Derek Walcott” (*Polisemie dell’isola*, Edizioni Anicia, 2015); “The Killer of Modern Times in Les Murray’s *Fredy Neptune* (*Textus* 2014, n.2); “Literacy Stories for Global Wits: Learning English Through the Literature-Language Line” (*Ariel* 2014, vol 46, nos 1-2, Special Issue on Global Pedagogy); “Grading Cultural Imperialism in English Language Theory and Practice, in *Le Simplegadi*, 2014, vol. 12); “Learning to Shant Well and the Art of the Good Translator”, in *Language and Translation in Postcolonial Literatures* (Routledge 2013).

E-MAIL • robertac@wfu.edu