

## THE CONCEPT OF PERSONALITY IN J. KONRAD'S NOVELS "LORD JIM", "THE HEART OF DARKNESS"

*This article gives analysis of the concept of the personality in J. Konrad's novels "Lord Jim" and "The Heart of Darkness". The main emphasis is made on the psychological and philosophical aspects of the concept based on the literary tradition and on the author's individual style.*

On the edge of the XX and XIX centuries some new tendencies appeared in the literary movement. One of the main aspects was the psychological orientation and the analysis of the inner world of the personality and a great emphasis was made at that time on the spiritual life of a man [4, 11]. The main character of the novels was the personality that is trying to find its place in the world and is looking for some eternal notions that could form some fundamental principles of his or her life. A man of the edge of the centuries accepted his time and himself in two dimensions: as some "consequence" and as some kind of "beginning"<sup>1</sup>. These were the main features of understanding of the personality at that period. These roamings in the sphere of psychology brings up the tendencies of romanticism and prepares neo-romanticism in English literature [3].

One of the representatives of psychological English prose is Joseph Conrad (1857—1924). In "Legouis and Cazamian's History of English Literature" he is presented in the following way: "Joseph Conrad is the most eminent symptom of what the new literary cosmopolitanism of the twentieth century might become — if this vein is designed to grow broader."<sup>2</sup> He was strongly influenced by the literature of France; English, first studied in books, then fully adopted by this mature personality, is the instrument of expression which his art employed in the process of explicit realisation. And yet, thanks to an exceptional gift of assimilation, this instrument has the most extensive range.

His art is the most composite product. However essential may be the element of original initiative in his development, the form which he took up, either

from instinctive choice or because he had experienced its arreal, had been created by others: it is the novel of adventure, whose new possibilities Stevenson and Kipling were already illustrating; and he combined with it the objective spirit of French naturalism. The movement and the method of his psychology, the attention he pays to the various points of view which cross and recross one another round each being, owe something to Henry James. Joseph Conrad was quite conscious of his manner: he has given a theory of it. This is the direct echo of the inevitable preferences; but also it was encouraged by the doctrines of Maupassan and Flaubert. His desire for objectivity has often led him to present the facts of his plots as reflected in one of the several minds, the vision of which the reader is to follow and harmonize; and this method gives rise to some uncertainty, as it does to high and rare effects.

Humour and pathos are to be found in his novels; and chiefly, an everpresent sense of mystery of fate, an implicit, diffused, profound ethical element. He has no idealized hero; the weakness of nature everywhere asserts itself. The main concern of J. Conrad as a writer and as a philosopher was the moral issue; he is concerned with the truth that appeared in his imagination every time he was creating a new character, a new man (Preface to "The Nigger of the "Narcissus") [11]. Even though, often a man in the novels of J. Conrad is put into separated romantic space, he is at the same time very "down-to-earth", very real and alive with his human feelings and thoughts. No wonder that the author of "Lord Jim" underlines that the main character of the novel is "one of us".

Morton Zabel remarks that the crisis in J. Conrad's stories occur also in the situation in which man is committed suddenly to his destiny.<sup>3</sup> The situation

<sup>1</sup> Жлуктенко Н. Ю. Английский психологический роман XX века. — К., 1988. — С. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Legouis and Cazamian's History of English Literature. — New York, 1957. — P. 1331.

<sup>3</sup> Hardy J. H. Man in the modern novel. — Washington, 1964. — P. 29.

often involves a peculiarity of sympathetic relationship of the hero and “another man”, a feeling of kinship which he never fully understands but which is close to identification. In “Heart of Darkness”, the commitment to his destiny involves for Marlow principally his feeling of identification with Kurtz. It is similar to correlation (not identification in this case) of Marlow and Lord Jim in the novel “Lord Jim”. Marlow’s commitment to “another man” is divided between Kurtz and the Russian. Marlow’s preservation of Kurtz reputation, keeping his secrets, is comparable to the captain’s service to Leggat. Because Kurtz is not innocent, has knowledge of big emotive power and suffers from the results of such knowledge, there can be no question of Marlow’s making to him gifts which are the talisman of protection for his continued career [6].

The hero of J. Conrad is romantic and contradictory at the same time. This kind of personality that makes his spirit work on the highest level of human ability was a discovery in the English literature a new step in understanding of human nature. Similar characters were developed by T. Hardy and O. Wilde [5].

Conrad’s events have a way of trusting men into situations where their hidden weaknesses will be brought to the surface<sup>4</sup> and this is exactly where the absurd of human nature is open and the real sense of the personality [2]. That is why Marlow of “Heart

of Darkness” embraces the inescapable darkness of life, but it is a mark of his humanity that he maintains his powers of discrimination within it. He discovers, also, that it is possible to function in darkness without falling satanistically into its bottomless pit like Kurtz, or existing, like the manager, without the slightest awareness of light. He maintains himself by continually making moral judgements about the experience before him. Lord Jim is given a right to create his own moral standards even though this leads him to an inside misfortune that is snares and demons from within. But unlike D. Lawrence who felt the darkness was somehow sacred and must not be eliminated, J. Conrad was all for expanding light.

The conception of life as a debate in which problems could be argued out and settled on J. Conrad’s conviction, confirmed by the earliest reading of Shakespeare, that life was a dream whose reality, fleeting the best, had to be constantly reformulated by the imagination. Experience was a formless element of which, nevertheless, one had to immerse in order to survive on human terms. J. Conrad took the world in its harshest possible aspect: it was neither good nor bad, it was, of itself, without meaning or ethical energy; its meaning could be fashioned only by the creative principle rooted in human nature.

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3. Кон И. С. Проблема “Я” в психологии и литературе // НТР и развитие художественного творчества.— Л., 1980.

4. Наливайко Д. С. Искусство: направления, течения, стили.— К., 1985.

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6. Campbell J. The Hero with a Thousand Faces.— New York, 1956.

7. Gillie Ch. Character in English Literature.— London, 1965.

8. Gurko L. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile.— New York, 1962.

9. Hardy J. Man in the Modern Novel.— Seattle, 1964.

10. Legouis and Cazamian’s History of English Literature.— New York, 1957.

11. Oxford Concise Companion to English Literature.— New York, 1998.

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## КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ОСОБИСТОСТІ ДЖ. КОНРАДА (на матеріалі романів “Лорд Джим” і “Серце п’їтьми”)

Стаття розглядає проблему особистості у творах Дж. Конрада “Лорд Джим” та “Серце п’їтьми”. Аналіз концепції особистості здійснюється через призму існуючої літературної традиції та спрямований на пошук особливих деталей психологізму, притаманного манері Дж. Конрада.

<sup>4</sup> Gurko L. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile.— New York, 1962.— P. 133