

ROBERT EDRIC'S *THE BOOK OF THE HEATHEN* AS A "POST-COLONIAL RESPONSE" TO JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Anna A. Ilunina

Voronezh State Forestry Engineering University named after G. F. Morozov
(Voronezh, Russia)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3871-7555>

Abstract. The article aims to analyze how the intertextual connections help the contemporary British writer Robert Edric to reveal some post-colonial issues in his novel *The Book of the Heathen* (2000). The author of the article makes a conclusion that the parallels with the main pretext – Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* – can be traced on the level of the chronotope, plot elements and system of characters and motifs at the ideological-thematic and linguistic levels. Nevertheless, Edric's *The Book of the Heathen* shows greater interest in the specific socio-political agenda and the role of the church in colonization, and the guilt of Britain and other European states in the situation in Congo at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and later. The contemporary piece of literature reflects disillusionment with the ideas of "colonization for the sake of civilization", based on its disappointing results. Edric's novel is also notable for its condemnation of racism. Other intertextual references – to biblical texts, R. Casement's diary, fictionalized biographies of explorers of Africa – also contribute to the representation of post-colonial issues, reflecting the writer's protest against the vices of the colonial system, the corruption of the colonial government, Euro-centrism, and the idea of the superiority of the white race.

Key words: contemporary British literature; intertextuality; Neo-Victorian postcolonial novel; Joseph Conrad; *Heart of Darkness*

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«КНИГА ЯЗЫЧНИКОВ» РОБЕРТА ЭДРИКА КАК ПОСТКОЛОНИАЛЬНЫЙ ОТВЕТ «СЕРДЦУ ТЬМЫ» КОНРАДА

Илунина А. А.

Воронежский государственный лесотехнический университет им. Г. Ф. Морозова
(Воронеж, Россия)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3871-7555>

SPIN-код: 8880-1862

Аннотация. Целью данной работы было проанализировать, каким образом интертекстуальные связи романа современного британского писателя Роберта Эдрика «Книга язычников» (2000) способствуют раскрытию постколониальной проблематики произведения. Сделаны выводы, что параллели с основным претекстом – повестью Дж. Конрада «Сердце тьмы» – присутствуют в книге на уровне хронотопа, элементов сюжета и системы персонажей, мотивов, на идейно-тематическом и языковом уровнях. Однако роман Роберта Эдрика «Книга язычников» демонстрирует больший интерес к конкретной социально-политической повестке, роли церкви в колонизации, вины Британии и других европейских государств в ситуации в Конго на рубеже XIX и XX веков и впоследствии. Современное произведение отражает разочарование идеями «колонизации ради цивилизации» на основании ее неутешительных результатов. Роман Роберта Эдрика также отличает осуждение расизма. Другие интертекстуальные отсылки – к библейским текстам, дневнику Р. Кейсмента, беллетризованным биографиям исследователей Африки также способствуют репрезентации постколониальной проблематики, отражая протест писателя против пороков колониальной системы, коррумпированности колониальной власти, евроцентризма, идеи превосходства белой расы.

Ключевые слова: современная британская литература; интертекстуальность; постколониальный неовикторианский роман; Джозеф Конрад; «Сердце тьмы»

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Introduction

Robert Edric (born 1956) is the pseudonym of Gary Edric Armitage, a popular British novelist whose career spans several decades. The writer managed to make himself known almost immediately: his second novel, "Winter Garden" (1985), was awarded the Jaimes Tait Black Memorial Prize; "A New Ice Age" (1986) won the Guardian Fiction Prize. To date, Edric has written twenty-nine novels in various genres: detective novel

("Cradle Song" (2003), "Siren Song" (2004), "Swan Song" (2005)), fantasy novel ("The Mermaids" (2007), "Salvage" (2010), "The Monster's Lament" (2013), "The Wrack Line" (2016)), Neo-Victorian novel ("The London Satyr" (2011), "The Devil's Beat" (2012), "Sanctuary" (2014)). Particular attention of the writer is attracted by the theme of the war traumas ("In Desolate Heaven" (1997), "Field Service" (2015)). Colonial past of European nations is the leading theme in "Elysium" (1995) and "The Book of the Heathen" (2000). Although Robert

Edric has not yet succeeded in becoming a writer of the first row, he has already taken his place in the literary hierarchy of Great Britain, as evidenced in particular by the inclusion of an article devoted to his work in the monograph "Modern British Novelists", published by the famous Routledge publishing house (and it mentions only fifty authors) [Rennison 2005: 61–65]. It should also be noted that the writer's novels "Peacetime" (2002) and "Gathering the Water" (2006) were nominated for the Booker Prize.

When published, all of the writer's novels were criticized in one way or another [Taylor 2006]. At the same time, the interest of literary critics in Edric's works seems insufficient to us, and the articles devoted to the study of his novels do not exhaust all the issues related to the ideological and artistic originality of his novels.

Artistic exploration of colonial and postcolonial issues runs like a red thread through the entire history of British literature of the 19–20th centuries; it is enough to mention the names of Rudyard Kipling, W. S. Maugham, George Orwell, Graham Greene, Paul Mark Scott. Contemporary writers, including Robert Edric, are re-examining the colonial past of British Empire. In particular, Edric's novel "The Book of the Heathen" dealing with postcolonial issues was nominated for the WH Smith Literary Award 2001 and has already attracted some attention from foreign literary critics. In particular, an article by E. Scott examines "The Book of the Heathen" in the context of the theory of trauma [Scott 2014]. In the work of H. Roos, the image of a missionary in Edric's novel is considered in a number of other modern works about the history of the Congo [Roos 2009]. Alongside with Matthew Kneal's "English Passengers" (2000), "The Book of the Heathen" can be attributed to the number of Neo-Victorian post-colonial novels highlighted in the well-known book by E. Helman and M. Llewellyl, dedicated to Neo-Victorianism [Heilmann, Llewellyl 2010: 66; Skorokhodko 2013].

We aim to reveal how the intertextual links, first of all, with the book of the British writer of Polish origin Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) "Heart of Darkness" (written in 1899, published in 1902) contribute to the representation of post-colonial issues in Robert Edric's novel "The Book of the Heathen". In our work we will rely on the theory of intertext and the theory and history of postcolonial literature.

Post-colonial reception of "Heart of Darkness"

The famous American literary critic H. Bloom wrote about "Heart of Darkness" that "it is perhaps the author's unique propensity for ambiguity that has opened the work to a wide range of critical interpretations <...> the most studied work of literature in college and university curricula" [Bloom's Guide 2009: 17]. Behind the adventure plot of the novel about a journey deep into Africa, the author's serious philosophical reasoning is hidden. Indeed, today there are already many interpretations of "Heart of Darkness", for example, from the positions of psychoanalysis [Murfin 1989] and feminism [Xin Sun 2018].

The reception of Conrad's story occupies an im-

portant place in post-colonial studies. In this context, the lecture "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness", given by the prominent Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe at the University of Massachusetts in 1975, played a key role. Achebe accused Conrad of racism [Achebe 1978]. He argued that Africa in his "offensive and totally deplorable book" [Ibid.: 11] appears as the embodiment of the "the other world", the antithesis of Europe and therefore civilization" [Ibid.: 3], the cultural achievements of the indigenous inhabitants of the continent are ignored, and the inhabitants themselves are dehumanized.

Subsequently, Achebe's point of view was repeatedly criticized [Firchow 2000]. The debate over whether Conrad was a supporter or opponent of imperialism and colonialism, or his position in this regard was more ambivalent, continues today in post-colonial studies [For more details see: Abu-Snoubar 2017]. Certainly, to consider "Heart of Darkness" a book only about imperialism and its consequences is to impoverish the content of one of the outstanding works of modernism. Nevertheless, in the ideological and political situation of the last decades, this very issue has acquired particular relevance. Let us also note that "Heart of Darkness" is a work that has already generated a lot of "artistic responses" in the literature of subsequent decades, from T. S. Eliot to modern works [Tolkachev 2019], including the novel by Robert Edric.

Chronotopic parallels of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and Edric's "The Book of the Heathen"

The chronotope and, in part, the plot of the "The Book of the Heathen" refers to the story of Conrad. The action in Edric's novel also mainly takes place at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, in the Congo Free State. Like Conrad, the novel's narrator is an Englishman working in Africa. In "Heart of Darkness" this is the sailor Marlow. Edric has the cartographer of the English trade mission James Frasier, whose friend, engineer Nicholas Frere, is accused of killing an African girl. Just as Marlow travels inland to take out the company's ailing agent, Kurtz, so Frasier goes to the Belgian base to help Frere, who, also ill, awaits punishment there. Just as Marlow initially admires Kurtz, dreaming of meeting him, so Frasier is convinced of Frere's innocence, however, the events of the novel contribute to his confidence being questioned.

It should be said that if in Conrad's story the place of action is more understandable to readers from the sociopolitical context of the era (for example, Marlow does not even name the river on which the main action of the book takes place, and, in general, the work, in our opinion, still gravitates more to philosophical generalizations than to topical specifics), Edric on the very first page clearly indicates the place and time of the action – The Congo Free State, 1897.

The territory of the Congo Basin for a long time remained out of the reach of European colonialists due to the difficult accessibility for Europeans and the diseases that raged there. In connection with the development of capitalism and the industrial revolution, in the second half of the 19th century, the need for resources for the needs of industry increased, which caused a new

round in the exploitation of the inhabitants of the “black continent” – the “race for Africa”, in which the leading European powers took part. In 1876, under the chairmanship of the Belgian King Leopold II the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa was organized. The said Association bought land from the heads of local tribes under enslaving agreements. Having secured the consent of the Berlin Conference of 1884, Leopold II managed to establish control over a vast territory and create the Free State of the Congo, which existed in 1885–1908. It was his personal possession, formally independent from the Belgian government. The period of existence of the Free State of the Congo was distinguished by the brutal exploitation and genocide of the local population, partly justified by the fact that the region was inhabited, among other things, by cannibal tribes. The attention of the world community forced Leopold II to sell his African possessions to Belgium in 1908, which led to the emergence of the Belgian Congo colony.

Intertextual analysis of the epigraphs of “The Book of the Heathen”

Edric makes one of the epigraphs to his novel an entry dated July 20, 1893, from the diary of Roger Casement (1864–1916), a poet and diplomat who worked as a sales agent in the Congo for several years: *“Imagine how we might now be forced to reconsider our understanding of the situation were the so-called heaven of the Bula Matari (Congo Free State) to contain among his multitudes men capable of keeping accounts of these terrible events, of this shameful history told only once – imagine his own books and what they might tell us – imagine then how we might be forced to live with our disgraceful part in all of this”* [Edric 2000: 1]. Given the epigraph, it might be reasonable to expect a work from a modern writer where a native of the Congo will get a “voice”, however, being a white Englishman himself, Edric does not take on such responsibility. His task, like Conrad's earlier, is to show, first of all, the transformation of the individual in the “heart of darkness” through the eyes of a white man, a colonialist.

In 1904, already the British consul in Boma, Casement prepared a report on the horrors of the regime in the Congo. His public speech became one of the key moments in the struggle of the world community for an end to the genocide of the local population and the transfer of the possessions of Leopold II to Belgium. Casement and Conrad met in 1890 while working in Congo and maintained friendly relations for a long time [For more details see: Meyers 1973]. Both of them were initially inspired, perceiving their work in Africa as serving the highest ideals of eradicating slavery and barbarism, however, they were disappointed with the real state of affairs. In 1903, Casement turned to Conrad for support regarding the investigation of atrocities in the Congo, and he wrote about him to his friend: “I am only a wretched novelist inventing wretched stories <...> He could tell things! Things I have tried to forget; things I never did know. He has had as many years of Africa as I had months – almost” [Meyers 1973: 66].

The second epigraph of the novel “The Book of

the Heathen” quotes the biblical book of Exodus: *“thou knowest the people, that they are set upon mischief. For they said unto me. ‘Make us gods, which shall go before us...”* (Exodus, 32, 22–23). In this part of the Old Testament, Aaron tells Moses why he created the golden calf. On the one hand, the parallel in this case is quite transparent – colonial exploitation was brought to life by a thirst for profit. On the other hand, one can see a different context: the desire of the colonists to justify their aggression with missionary goals, the “white man's burden” to pacify and “introduce civilization” to “violent peoples”.

Parallels in the systems of characters and motives between Conrad's “Heart of Darkness” and Edric's “The Book of the Heathen”

Returning to the intertextual links between Edric's novel and Conrad's story, it should be noted that the parallels in the system of characters between the works are non-linear. Not only the image of the authoritarian priest Klein, who made hatred his religion and created among the natives a kind of cult of his person, accompanied by cruel rituals, refers to the image of Kurtz from “Heart of Darkness”, but also, of course, the image of Nicholas Frere. A talented ethnographer, he goes to Africa not only to earn money for his marriage, like Kurtz, but, above all, to explore mysterious territories, however, the reality of life on a trading mission depresses him (*“He had expected wilderness in which to wander, but instead he found only a place already long since sacrificed to the gods of profit and loss”* [Edric 2000: 9]). He often makes expeditions to the surrounding area. In one of them, according to him, he witnesses the torture of a little black girl by the natives and kills her in order to end her torment. It would seem that what he committed can be considered an act of mercy rather than cruelty, however, Frere admits that an irresistible force inside him longed for him to be a witness and even a participant in an act of cannibalism. This idea prompted him time after time to go to areas inhabited by cannibals (*“I was there I was watching, I wanted to watch, I wanted them to go on doing what they did. It was what I had gone in search of, what I had found”* [Edric 2000: 25]). At the same time, it is obvious that Frere is an unreliable narrator. This fact is only emphasized by Nicholas' confession that at that time he was feverish and confused. The reader does not fully understand whether Frere actually witnessed the events that preceded the act of cannibalism, or whether they were the fruit of his sick imagination.

Conrad tells about Marlow being an experienced sailor, while Edric's narrator Frasier comes from an aristocratic and wealthy family. When deciding to work in Africa, he was driven by high goals associated with missionary service, the desire to get away from the boredom of everyday life, to test himself (as, in general, in the case of Marlow). His aspirations, in many respects, are close to Frere's goals, it is not for nothing that the novel focuses on the fact that his name in French means “brother”. This “spiritual kinship” between Frasier and Frere, who, in fact, are a kind of double in the novel, has already been emphasized in the work of E. Scott [Scott 2014: 80]. However,

we also note: Frere stipulates that his last name probably originally sounded like friar (eng. “monk”), which again refers to the idea of missionary service, both religion and science, which, among other things, justified the colonial expansion.

In our opinion, in the name of Frasier (James Charles Russel Frasier) references to the names of representatives of social Darwinism and positivism, namely James Frazer, Bertrand Russell, who developed, in a certain sense, the ideological base of colonialism, are “encrypted”. Like Marlow and Kurtz, Frasier and Frere have much in common, however, both Marlow and Frasier more successfully resist the darkness, do not allow it to completely take over their souls.

H. Roos reasonably believes that in Frere’s image there are references to the personality of the famous African explorer Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904), who became the governor of the Congo Free State and was subsequently accused of cruelty against the local population [Roos 2009]. The scientist also refers to an episode described by Stanley Morton’s biographer T. Jeal, which occurred during the expedition with one of his companions, James Jameson, who gave the slave girl he bought to be torn to pieces by cannibals, while he himself at that time watched what was happening and made sketches [See: Jeal 2007: 356]. We believe that the image of Frere, like the image of Frasier has absorbed the features of many Europeans who arrived in Central Africa in the second half of the 19th century.

Following Kurtz, both Klein and Frere could not endure the “white man’s burden”, the “burden of superiority”, which they were implanted at the state and ideological level, but which “awakened” the darkness in their souls. As, in fact, in Conrad’s novel, in “The Book of the Heathen”, darkness in a metaphorical sense can be interpreted as “the subconscious of a person, his hidden abilities and subordinate feelings” [Blinova 2016: 25]. Not so much the natives with their cruel customs embody darkness, darkness grows in the hearts of the colonists in an atmosphere of indifference, greed and permissiveness that reigns in Congo. Of course, Frere, and even Klein, do not represent such a majestic, endowed with truly universal talents and semi-demonic figure as Conrad’s Kurtz. They are more prosaic, closer to reality, the more frighteningly plausible are the transformations that occur to them.

The motif of darkness, quoted from Conrad’s story, runs through Edric’s entire novel, retaining its symbolic meaning. So, Frasier witnesses the death of the ship during many days of tropical rain. The captain refused to leave the ship with valuable cargo, until the “dark water” [Edric 2000: 12] destroyed the boat and dragged it into a whirlpool. The reason for this is the passion for profit, which dragged a person into the “abyss of darkness”.

In a dark cell in a Belgian prison, Frasier mistakes a local resident for Frere. The prisoner tries to defend himself from the beating: “*Instead, a native knelt in the far corner, both hands clasped over his face, a man as black as the darkness which enveloped him*” [Edric 2000: 3]. This episode can also be interpreted as the fact that the darkness comes precisely from the colonists who broke into the life of the natives. Interestingly, Frere is

in the same position on the last pages of the novel, before being sent to the capital of the Congo Free State. He, too, falls prey to the darkness generated by the atmosphere of lawlessness.

At the same time, Frere’s courage lies in the fact that he recognizes the power of darkness over himself, sees its beginnings in his soul (“*In the darkness I saw him straighten*” [Edric 2000: 3]). Having become, among other things, a hostage of foreign policy games between the Congo Free State and Great Britain, Frere, nevertheless, internally realizes his guilt and stoically prepares to accept death.

At the request of Frere, Frasier burns all his diaries, as well as the maps he created himself. It should be noted that cartography played an important role in colonial discourse. J. B. Harley called it one of the tools and representations of power according to M. Foucault, associated with the desire for dominance and control [Harley 1989]. Researcher T. Bassett substantiated that cartography made a significant contribution to the formation of empires, legitimizing the spread of the power of colonial powers in Africa. In the course of analyzing the cartographic methods of various eras, he came to the conclusion that “blank spaces” appeared for the first time only in 1749 on the maps of J. B. D’Anville; before that, unknown or unexplored territories were filled with drawings and images of animals and mountains; the borders of African states were reproduced, despite the fact that information about them was fragmentary [For more details see: Bassett 1994]. The appearance of “blank spaces” on the maps reflected, in particular, the growing conviction that only information collected by European researchers should be recognized as authoritative. Often, “blank spaces” on maps also reflected a desire to hide information from other powers. Map users interpreted them as territories open to exploration and colonization. So, returning to the literary works we are analyzing, it was precisely the voids on the maps that prompted Marlow at Conrad and Frasier at Edric to go to Africa. The destruction of maps in the novel “The Book of the Heathen” can be seen as a spontaneous protest against colonization: the characters are disappointed in the knowledge that brings suffering and devastation to the lands of the natives.

Frere, like Conrad’s Kurtz, does not want Frasier to tell his fiancé, who has remained in England, the truth about him. He asks a friend to give his beloved, Frasier’s sister, his volume of the Bible. Thus, the official religion, which has stained itself in the eyes of the heroes of the novel, is contrasted with a personal inner moral tuning fork, against which the characters compare their thoughts, desires, and actions.

Returning to the epigraph of the novel, it should be noted that it also states that the above verse from the book of Exodus was underlined in the personal edition of the Bible, located in the Pitt Rivers Museum and owned by H. E. S. Frere¹ (“*Marked in the personal Bible of N. E. S. Frere (1864–1897) The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford*”. *The Pitt Rivers Museum is an Oxford University museum dedicated to ethnography and archaeology*) [Edric 2000: 1]). Although the personality of Frere is invented by Edric, using such a false reference, the writer em-

phasizes in the quasiquote that within the artistic world of the novel, the character nevertheless entered his name in the annals of science, and also convinces the reader to trust what is happening on the pages of the book, to create the illusion of its reality.

Racism and imperialism and their origins and consequences in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and Edric's "The Book of the Heathen"

Almost all researchers of "Heart of Darkness" admit that the Africans in Conrad's story appear, rather, as a faceless mass, the background against which events unfold in the life of Europeans. They are devoid of names, throughout the book they say only a couple of phrases. In Edric's novel, certain attempts are made to deepen the characters of black characters (the crippled boy, "sisters" Perpetua and Felicity, the beloved of Cornelius Evangeline), however, given that they are also described from the point of view of a white narrator overcome by racial prejudice, in general, indigent the inhabitants in the novel "The Book of the Heathen", just like in Conrad, are rather a background for the development of stories and research into the psychology of the colonists.

If the vices of the colonial system, the inhuman exploitation in Conrad's story, are undeniably condemned, as E. Said, in particular, spoke about, noting the harsh criticism of imperialism in "Heart of Darkness" [Said 1993: 30], the situation with racism is more complicated. In our opinion, it is still present in the way the indigenous people of Africa are depicted in "Heart of Darkness".

The "The Book of the Heathen" by Edric, in general, is distinguished by the condemnation of racism, however, first of all, due to the specifics of the image of the narrator, it is rather implicitly expressed. In the novel, the reader observes how gradually, imperceptibly even for himself, the narrator moves away from the initial strong racial prejudices towards the local population. For example, while Frasier's white colleagues at first tend to present the station's closure scene as an uncontrollable and illogical outburst of rage by the station's black workers, it is later revealed that the locals have not been paid for the months they have already worked, which quite rightly aroused their questions and displeasure and on the contrary, the British reaction to this exceeded the limits of reasonable defense. Thus, the myth of the indigenous inhabitants of Africa is questioned as the complete opposite of Europeans and the embodiment of unreasonableness, illogicality, blind obsession with primitive instincts.

Conrad's story quite graphically depicts scenes of lawlessness happening in the Congo. In addition to describing cruel executions, inhuman working conditions, diseases that Conrad also has, special attention in Edric's novel is paid to the theme of the slave trade, especially the sale of women and children into slavery for prostitution. "The Book of the Heathen" shows in detail that the British authorities connived and even contributed to the imposition of a cruel repressive regime in the Congo Free State, colluded with the slave traders. If Conrad does not pay attention to the role of the church in colonization, Edric creates the sinister

figure of the Jesuit missionary Klein, who takes part in the slave trade.

The symbol of beautiful but oppressed Africa in the "The Book of the Heathen" is a giraffe bound and kneeling in a cramped cage, doomed to death. Frasier describes it in a poignant scene when a barge arrives at the British Trade Mission wharf, loaded with cages of animals being taken out of Africa to be sold to European zoos. Of course, there are obvious parallels with human trafficking. It is interesting to note that the officer of the British mission, Fletcher, seems to be ready to shoot the unfortunate animal, saving him from suffering, which causes a parallel with Frere's act, however, he refuses this idea, because in this case he will have to compensate the merchant for the losses. In the context of the novel, this can be perceived as cowardice, given that the giraffe is doomed to a long and painful death. Metaphorically, Fletcher's actions are projected onto the entire British policy towards the Congo Free State, when the desire not to lose profit turns out to be stronger than the moral law.

Recognizing the cruelties that accompany colonial conquests, Marlow in Conrad believes that all of them are partially justified by a good idea, the one that once turned the barbaric lands of "the foggy Albion" into a beautiful metropolis, "the mistress of the Sea". The heroes of Edric are more pessimistic, seeing how the colonists leave behind plundered lands, burned villages, empty missions.

It should be noted that during the period of writing the novel by Edric, the so-called Great African War (1998–2002) on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo took place, in which about twenty armed groups representing nine states participated. If at the end of the 19th century the struggle was for rubber and ivory, then at the turn of the millennium, minerals, gold and diamonds became the subject of a dispute. Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe acted in close cooperation with the leading Western powers. Experts believe that, for example, Uganda, with a military budget of just \$100 million, would not have been able to pull off a costly military operation against the Democratic Republic of the Congo without US assistance. Between 4 and 4,5 million people died during the war and its consequences, famine and epidemics. "One of the features of the war was inhuman cruelty. Half a million women became victims of sexual violence, often fighters attacked five-year-old girls" [Melnikova 2008]. The historical parallels in this case are sadly obvious, as well as the fact that Edric, recalling the colonial past, certainly refers to the present Central African region, which to this day is the arena of the struggle for the resources of the Western powers.

The endings of the two works also have something in common: Edric: "*the vessel disappeared completely into the utter and impenetrable darkness of the night*" [Edric 2000: 28], Conrad: "*The offing was barred by a black band of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed somber under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness*" [Conrad 2010: 13] (*our italics – I. A.*). There is a disturbing note at the end of each of the novels. The darkness has not gone away, it is thickening, it is near.

Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that, in comparison with the main pretext – “Heart of Darkness” by J. Conrad, parallels with which are presented at the level of the chronotope, plot elements and system of characters, motives, at the ideological, thematic and linguistic levels, the novel “The Book of the Heathen” by Robert Edric shows a greater interest in a specific socio-political agenda, the role of the church in colonization, the guilt of Britain and other European states in the situation in the Congo at the turn of the 19th and 20th

centuries and later. A contemporary piece reflects disillusionment with the ideas of “colonization for the sake of civilization”, based on its disappointing results. Robert Edric’s novel is also notable for its condemnation of racism. Other intertextual references – to biblical texts, R. Casement’s diary, fictionalized biographies of African researchers also contribute to the representation of post-colonial issues, reflecting the writer’s protest against the vices of the colonial system, the corruption of the colonial government, Eurocentrism, and the idea of the superiority of the white race.

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Данные об авторе

Илунина Анна Александровна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры иностранных языков, Воронежский государственный лесотехнический университет им. Г. Ф. Морозова (Воронеж, Россия).
Адрес: 394086, Россия, г. Воронеж, ул. Тимирязева, 8.
E-mail: ailunina@yandex.ru.

Author's information

Ilunina Anna Aleksandrovna – Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of Department of Foreign Languages, Voronezh State Forestry Engineering University named after G. F. Morozov (Voronezh, Russia).

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